

CEMETERY DANCERS

SPRING 1992 / Volume Four, Issue Two

\$4.00

1991
World Fantasy
Award
WINNER

DEAN R. KOONTZ
RICHARD &
R. C. MATHESON
EDWARD BRYANT
JOE R. LANSDALE

GARY RAISOR
BRIAN HODGE
T. LIAM McDONALD
STANLEY WIATER



0 74470 78335 0

666 Reasons to Get Our Catalogue:

Dark Tower III: The Wastelands by **Stephen King** at \$38, plus \$3.50 shipping/handling can be ordered along with 18 other King titles, many signed by the master ...and another 77 Donald M. Grant titles (Archival & O. Train also) Mint, signed copies of *Eyes of the Overworld* and 59 other **Jack Vance** titles, many signed...we can even sell you the "Eyes" cover painting...

Dean Koontz, a favorite of ours, has three Dark Harvest titles and appears in other DH titles as well. Also we carry his latest, *Cold Fire* (we have a signed copy), plus many others...and 81 Underwood-Miller titles...and over 100 Arkham House...

Stephen E. Fabian originals (10), portfolios (12) and books about or illustrated by (42) are included in our last two catalogues, in one, four entire pages of different listings...and titles from Wildside Press, Borderlands, Ganley, Owlswick, Whispers Press, Scream Press, Charnel House, and others...

In our latest catalogue:

We have 11 titles by **Piers Anthony**; 22 titles by **R. A. Lafferty**; nine by **Tanith Lee**; 14 by **Isaac Asimov**; seven by **Fritz Leiber**; nine by **Michael Bishop**; 20 by **H. P. Lovecraft**; 16 by **Robert Bloch**; 17 by **Ray Bradbury**; 12 titles by **Brian Lumley**; 15 **Andre Norton** titles; nine by **Joseph Payne Brennan**; 22 titles by **Robert Silverberg**; 8 titles by **Peter Straub**; 12 by **A.E. Van Vogt**; 16 by **Gene Wolfe**; 16 by **Roger Zelazny**; 24 by **L. Sprague de Camp**; 14 by **Philip Jose Farmer**; 33 by or about **Robert E. Howard**; and we might have your favorite author as well...

The Dust Jacket



ARTWORK BY AND COURTESY OF RANDY BROEKER

In our latest art catalogue:

We have more than 40 artists represented with paintings, original drawings, portfolios and sculpture as well as books about them or illustrated by them. The artists include **Jeff Jones**, **Alicia Austin**, **Ned Dameron**, **Michael Whelan**, **Bernie Wrightson**, **Frank Kelly Freas**, **Virgil Finlay** (yes, we have an original for sale), **Fritz Eichenberg**, **Lynd Ward** (signed lithos next catalogue), **Randy Broeker**, **Clark Ashton Smith** (two originals this catalogue), **Boris Vallejo**, **Dennis Liberty** and many others...

Jack R. Carollo

Bookseller

Collector and fan
for 37 years

Send \$2.00 for two catalogues
(credited with first order)

The Dust Jacket

9835 Robin Road
Niles, Illinois 60648

(708) 965-0114

... coming soon ...

Announcing **CD** Publications' Debut Title (Spring 1992)

PRISONERS and other stories

by **ED GORMAN**



Afterword by **Dean R. Koontz**

"Ed Gorman's work is fresh, polished, excitingly paced, thoroughly entertaining--and has something to say about the way we live, the way we are, and what we wish we were." --Dean R. Koontz

Over the past five years, Ed Gorman has written several novels that have attracted a small but ardent following--novels now being published around the world.

Now Gorman has written his first collection of short stories--dark suspense, crime, horror, western--fresh and powerful tales from the writer whose first novel *Library Journal* called "An auspicious debut." Included in *PRISONERS AND OTHER STORIES* is "Turn Away," which won the Shamus and was nominated for the Anthony Award in mystery fiction, and "Prisoners," which was nominated for last year's Edgar Award.

"I didn't think anyone could top his *THE AUTUMN DEAD* but Gorman came back and did it himself. *A CRY OF SHADOWS* will touch you as deeply as anything you'll read this year." --F. Paul Wilson

"Gorman has a wonderful writing style that allows him to say things of substance in an entertaining way." --The San Francisco Examiner

"Gorman has set his own very personal high standard for the hard-boiled genre." --Fear
"NIGHT KILLS is absolutely riveting, reminiscent of *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. But, like all of Gorman's work, the book's grasp of people and relationships makes the terror all that much stronger." --The Time Machine
"Gorman is a serious novelist with a voice and viewpoint all his own." --Reflections

Reserve your copy now! Only \$20.95 + \$1.05 shipping & handling.

Deluxe trade hardcover, full color dust jacket, acid free paper.

Order from: CD PUBLICATIONS, P.O. BOX 858, EDGEWOOD, MD 21040.



FICTION**CEMETERY DANCE MAGAZINE**Volume Four, Issue Two
Spring 1992**EDITOR/PUBLISHER**
Richard T. Chizmar**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**
Kara L. Tipton**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Tyson Blue
 Edward Bryant
 Matthew J. Costello
 Ed Gorman
 Charles L. Grant
 Joe R. Lansdale
 T. Liam McDonald
 Thomas F. Monteleone
 Bob Morris
 Kathryn Ptacek
 Paul Sammon
 David E. Webb

GRAPHICS EDITOR
Alfred Klosterman**CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS**

Alfred Klosterman
 Allen Koszowski

COVER ARTIST
Charles Lang**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**
Adam FuscoISSN #
1047-7675

COPYRIGHT © 1992 by Richard T. Chizmar. All rights revert to contributor upon publication. All letters may be edited/published unless stated otherwise. All inquiries should be addressed to *Cemetery Dance*, P.O. Box 858, Edgewood, MD 21040. No response without SASE. Advertising rates available. Discount rates available for bulk and standing retail orders.

BY CIVILIZED MEANS	Gary A. Braunbeck	5
CANDY BARS FOR ELVIS	Norman Partridge	16
LESS THAN HUMAN	Gary Raisor	29
THE EXCLUSIVE	Sidney Williams	40
MAMA'S BOY	C.S. Puqua	48
THE ANIMAL	Robert Pettitt	70
A BARGAIN AT ANY COST	Francis J. Mattozo	88
DEATHGRIP	Brian Hodge	95

DEPARTMENTS

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR	Richard T. Chizmar	3
RAMBLINGS FROM THE DARK	Charles L. Grant	12
GORMANIA	Ed Gorman	20
A CONVERSATION WITH DEAN R. KOONTZ (Interviewed by Tyson Blue)		22
MOTHERS AND FATHERS ITALIAN ASSOCIATION	Thomas F. Monteleone	34
NIGHTMARE ALLEY	Matthew J. Costello	37
TERROR EX ANIMA	T. Liam McDonald	45
A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD MATHESON & R.C. MATHESON (Interviewed by Stanley Wister)		52
BOOK REVIEWS	Edward Bryant	58
HORROR QUIZ	A.R. Morian	65
TRASH THEATRE	Joe R. Lansdale & David Webb	66
SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLISHING (Donald Grant)	Bob Morris	73
ANTHOLOGY ATTIC	Kathy Ptacek	78
ROUGH CUTS	Paul Sammon	81
NEEDFUL KINGS & OTHER THINGS	Tyson Blue	91
CD BOOK REVIEWS	Various reviewers	98

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

RICHARD T. CHIZMAR

CEMETERY DANCE #12 -- Welcome back to another issue of *Cemetery Dance*, the magazine of dark mystery, suspense, and horror fiction, non-fiction features, columns, interviews, news, and reviews. If you have picked us up from a book or specialty store and are reading us for the first time . . . enjoy this Spring Issue. We hope you are impressed enough to subscribe or keep an eye out for the Summer Issue, arriving at bookstores in early August.

**

Believe it or not, what you are now holding and reading is the 12th issue of *Cemetery Dance*. We've been around a bit longer than many people thought we'd make it, and I'd like to offer my special thanks to all the authors and artists who have appeared in the first dozen issues . . . especially the regulars. If you want to see the real backbone of this publication, just turn to the contents page and take a look at the list of Contributing Editors and the much shorter list of artists. Each and every person on that page has gone beyond the call of duty many times, and for that I extend immense gratitude and admiration. Thank you!

Although there is plenty of room for improvement, we're making some nice progress with this magazine, and I plan to keep it up-and-running for a long time to come. Keep an eye open for improved graphics throughout the mag and a cleaner, more stylistic page design in future issues. Hopefully, we'll continue to grow and improve with each and every issue -- that has been our goal from the very beginning, and continues to be today.

**

We've got a great issue for you this time around, highlighted by a pair of wonderful interviews -- Dean R. Koontz and Richard & R.C. Matheson. Plus all the usual columns, features, and reviews, a pair of novel excerpts, and a half-dozen short stories. Enjoy!

**

We have received many letters and phone calls regarding our new hardcover book imprint -- *CD Publi-*

cations -- so I'm going to use a chunk of this space to explain a bit more about the operation.

We hope to publish the best authors in the horror, suspense, and mystery genres in the *CD Publications* line. Short story collections, original and reprint novels, anthologies, non-fiction books -- we plan to do it all.

Our first title -- due in mid-May -- is columnist and award-winning crime author Ed Gorman's first short story collection, *Prisoners & Other Stories*. The book features 22 short stories and a wonderful Afterword by Dean R. Koontz. Our Summer title is *The Definitive Best of The Horror Show* edited by David B. Silva, featuring 41 short stories from the likes of Dean R. Koontz, Robert R. McCammon, Joe R. Lansdale, and many others. The Fall season will see a special signed, slipcased edition of Joe R. Lansdale's classic serial killer novel, *Act of Love* (with a new Introduction and other material). And, finally, coming this Winter, the debut of our brand new dark suspense series, *Thrillers*, featuring an Introduction by Joe R. Lansdale and original novella-length work from Richard Laymon, Nancy Collins, Chet Williamson, and Ardath Mayhar. *Thrillers #2* (1993) will be Introduced by Ed Gorman and feature F. Paul Wilson, John Coyne, and a few surprise authors.

We hope you are just as excited by this first year line-up of titles as we are. We plan to put a lot of care into both our Trade and Limited Editions, and give personal attention to our individual customers and retail accounts. Please drop us a note and let us know what you think.

**

Enough for this time around. Please remember . . . Ingram Periodicals is *Cemetery Dance*'s bookstore distributor. If you frequent a chain -- yes, we are carried in many B. Dalton's and Walden's -- or an independent book store, please ask the manager to order *Cemetery Dance* and ask your friends to do the same. In addition, we are carried by virtually all the comic/specialty store distributors, so please ask your specialty store managers, too. Thanks -- we appreciate it!

Now turn up the lights, flip the page, and start the dance . . .



BY CIVILIZED MEANS

GARY A. BRAUNBECK

GARY A. BRAUNBECK is, in my humble opinion, one of the two or three most promising young authors writing genre fiction today. Every time Braunbeck short story or novella appears in *Cemetery Dance*, it is the reader's favorite tale of the issue, or a close second. And it's not hard to figure out why -- his razor-sharp prose practically bleeds on the page. I can't wait until the publishers grab that first Braunbeck novel, so I can stand back and watch as a larger audience discovers this talent.

"... and yet I am mine own Executioner."

-- Donne

Devotions upon Emergent Occasions
Meditation XII

1

Some mornings Hank swore he could still see blood on the clock's pendulum.

The ersatz-grandfather clock (simulated wood grain, which meant plastic, which meant cheap--twenty-nine ninety-five, a Blue Light special) hung on the wall behind the counter. He remembered how surprised he'd been afterward that none of the bullets had struck the clock. But the blood -- Lord, the blood -- had slopped all over the thing, and when the pendulum continued to swing back and forth--

--tick-a-tick-a-tick--

--a few globules had spattered across the mirror below like droplets of red rain.

He remembered that clearly now as he turned on the rest of the diner's lights, unlocked the doors, and started heating up the grill.

He tried very hard -- as he did every morning -- not to look at the spot where he himself had gone down.

He started refilling the catsup, mustard, and cream containers, ignoring the stiffness in his shoulders, legs, and back.

He wondered--

--tick-a-tick-a-tick--

--about all the things by which a man measured his life and its worth, and wondered if any of it was really fair. When you got right down to it, we were all in the process

of being shot; it just took the bullet sixty years or so to reach you. In the meantime you still paid on the house and took medicine. Go figure.

The bell over the door jingled and he turned to see Marge entering.

"You're early," he said.

"Like I got other things to do," she replied, taking off her coat and hanging it on the rack by the restrooms. Hank looked at the clock.

8:30.

He hoped the others would remember what day this was.

Marge came up next to him and put her hand on his shoulder. "I really don't think you need to do all this. Something tells me we're not gonna have much business today."

Hank forced a smile and touched her hand. "It's all I know, this place. I own it, I do the cooking, the books, help with the cleaning, shut everything down, turn off the lights at night, and go home."

. . . tick-a-tick-a-tick . . .

"It's how I measure my days."

"You never were a whole lot of fun," said Marge, donning her apron and checking to make sure she had a full order pad.

"I'm sorry I was never much fun," whispered Hank.

Perhaps sensing that she'd hurt his feelings, Marge put down her pad and gave Hank a hug. "I didn't mean nothing by it, you. Don't worry. After today, you won't have that weight hanging around no more."

Hank glanced at the clock.

8:32.

"Think everyone else will remember?"

"I hope so," Marge said. "They've been waiting for it long enough."

And so they busied themselves, not speaking, and listening to the clock mark the seconds.

. . . tick-a-tick . . .

2

. . . a-tick . . .

"Gonna fry him this morning!"

"Waste his ass for good!"

"Wouldn't look for no Mother's Day card this year!"

All this followed by cackling laughter as the unseen

teenagers made their way past the house, but not before throwing something wet and heavy onto the front porch. Edna imagined it was probably mud or more likely dogshit, that was the style around here.

She sank back farther into the chair and pulled the comforter up to her chin, as if it would be enough to protect her from everything that waited outside the house. The house; empty now but for her.

She looked at the clock over the fireplace.

8:40 a.m.

The phone would ring in another five minutes and she'd talk to her son for the first time in weeks.

For the last time in his life.

The sentence would be carried out at 9:05.

She stretched a little. Her brittle bones cracked with the sound of distant gunfire and her skin felt like a not-quite-dried plaster cast. She hoped the teenagers wouldn't come back. She hoped that the town would forget about her after a while so she could go out in public without fear of being harassed or attacked. She prayed no one would call to gloat and tie up the line: the prison only allowed the call to be placed once and if the line was busy . . . well, then, that was that.

She silently cursed the arthritis in her legs and hip for rendering her incapable of making the journey up-state to see her son this morning. She wanted so much to be near him, comfort him in these last minutes, kiss him one more time. But even if she had been able to make the trip, there wasn't enough money to pay expenses, nor did she have any friends left who wished to associate with her, let alone drive her all the way to the prison.

She stared at the phone. How many times had it rung in the past two weeks? How many times had she answered to find an anonymous voice on the other end telling her how glad they were that her monster of a son was getting what he deserved?

He's just like his father. Always let things get so bottled up until . . .

But that didn't explain why Alan had done it.

Six people, two of them kids not yet eleven. He'd just been sitting there at the counter in the diner, his shift at the service station over, eating his evening hamburger with fries and a glass of lemonade. They said he just got up and paid for his meal, left a good tip, smiled at the cashier and went out to his truck, then came back a few moments later and opened fire with his hunting rifle, shooting until six people were dead and eight more wounded. The police had found him sitting outside unarmed, touching the windows and admiring the blood as it oozed down the inside of the glass. He offered no resistance, had gone quite peacefully and confessed. Passed nine different psychiatric examinations. Stood trial.

8:44 a.m.

Edna blinked the tears out of her eyes. Her hands shook as she pulled off the comforter, painfully stood,

and shuffled toward the phone stand. She had purposely set an uncomfortable chair next to the phone; she would have only fifteen minutes and wanted nothing to distract her attention from her son, least of all trying to get more comfortable. It was the last time they'd ever speak and she wanted to give Alan every consideration. Maybe he'd even let her know, finally, what had been bothering him so much that he had to go and do something so terrible.

Since his father's death ten years ago, Alan had taken good care of her. That was good. An old woman needed companionship, not to mention help with the chores and all. Alan was real good about that, never complaining about her or his job being lonely or nothing.

Maybe that was why he'd done it. Maybe all the complaining he'd kept inside had finally decided to come out. Maybe he was sorry that--

The phone rang.

8:45.

She reached out and wrapped her aching fingers around the receiver and lifted it to her ear. It felt like she was lifting her husband's lifeless body from the hospital bed all over again.

She listened. Hissing. Shuffling. A beep. Then someone coughed.

"Mom?"

A smile crossed her face as something wet slipped down her cheek. "Alan."

Silence for a moment.

"I'm supposed to tell you, uh . . . they're recording this conversation, mom."

" . . . s'okay . . ."

"So how . . . how're you doing?"

Just awful, honey, what did you think? You're gonna be dead in twenty minutes and I'll be alone and I'll miss you so much. "I feel okay."

He cleared his throat. "That's good. I worry, you know?"

"I know. You always were a worrier." So why didn't you tell me about it, honey? You could've come to me and said "Mom, I need to talk to somebody." I would've listened.

They fed me a real fine breakfast, mom. I got to have two pieces of the peach pie you sent me."

I made four before I got the crust the way you like it. "Was it all right?"

"It was the best, mom. The two guards who've been . . . well, I let them have some, too. They said to tell you that you make a great pie. And it was your best. The crust was nice and light and flaky and it tasted just like Sunday mornings after church when I was little. Do you remember the way you'd always make a big meal for us after church? Me and dad would take care of the chores after we changed from our Sunday clothes and you'd have . . . you'd . . ."

He inhaled sharply. Made a slurping sound.

Edna's heart skipped a beat.

Her son was crying.

"Alan? Alan, you listen to me. You got yourself a priest there, don't you?"

"... yeah..."

"You tell him everything. He'll... he'll forgive you so your soul will go to Heaven. I know that you didn't mean to hurt anyone. I know that you just kept too much inside and didn't know what to do about it. Your daddy was the same way."

"... I know..." He was sounding better. "I love you, mom. Very much. I'm sorry about the way people have been treating you since this happened. I wish I was there to make... to make it all better, make it all right somehow..."

"I'll be all right, hon. Oh, God, I love you, too. I'm so sorry that I couldn't find a way to be there for you today." Her voice cracked. "I'm gonna miss you every second for the rest of my life."

"Maybe you can find somebody else to watch your television programs with."

"It won't be the same without you." God, did he think that was all she needed him for? He was her son and she would never curse his being born, regardless of what the world called him. People used to call his daddy names; Edna too, for that matter. Called them worthless. White Trash. Welfare scum. Lazy charity cases. Forget that Alan's father had got cancer that sucked at him like a leech until he couldn't stand up to pee, let alone work. Forget that no one in the family had much of an education. Forget all that. Just see the not-quite-clean clothes. Just see the ignorance. Forget about love. Ignore a young man's loneliness when he sticks by his mother after his father dies, never marrying or even dating a girl because that would keep him away from home and home was where he was needed. Forget all that. Just make fun of them and shake your head and walk away.

Then wonder why these things happen, she thought.

"Mom, listen, I ain't got too much longer. I want you to know something. None of this is your fault, understand? I couldn't talk about the stuff that was goin' through my mind. Some of the things I thought about... weren't proper. Weren't things you talk about in a decent home."

"Why... why did you do it, hon?"

"I just saw all of them people looking so happy, you know? Like they was all so much better than us and we was dirt on their shoes or something. I was tired of people lookin' down their noses at us 'cause we was poor. I was tired from workin' so many shifts at the station and us still not havin' money to go out for steaks and a movie. I was mad at myself because I was starting to feel like I was trapped. I was sick of not having a girl to buy flowers for."

"You always bring me flowers."

"That's 'cause you'll always be my best girl, mom. But I wanted a girl I could... you know..."

"Oh, hon..."

He took a deep breath.

8:52.

"But there's something else I wanted to tell you, mom. You remember that one book you sent for me to read? That one about them farmers from Oklahoma?"

"That was your daddy's book. He always loved it so."

"Well, there's that one part at the end where the son is getting ready to leave 'cause he killed that man in a fight, and he's talking with his mom and he tells her that he figures all of us are just part of one big soul and he makes it sound so beautiful. You remember that part?"

"Yes, I do. Your daddy believed that and so do I."

Something cold crept into Alan's voice, something that was beyond anger, something that took a person's hand and lead them to a place where there was no room for love, no use for pity, and little consequence if remorse were present or not. "Well, I don't think he had it quite right. You know what I think, mom? I think that this one big soul isn't such a beautiful thing after all. I think it's something that was beautiful once but then saw how people treated each other, saw the way that some grabbed all they could get while others had to work themselves into a grave for just a few scraps and leave nothing behind... and I think when it saw this it got itself a bellyful of sick and didn't do anything to make itself better. And I think it's been getting worse and worse. And sometimes, sometimes it gets so much puke stuck in its throat that it's gotta spit a little out and give people a taste of what they done to it. Don't you see, mom? We ain't all part of that one big soul, we're just chunks of its puke and sometimes people gotta smell it so they'll know what's waitin' for us all when we die! It's never gonna stop making us pay for what we done to it. Never."

"Oh, hon, don't... don't say things like that, please? You're just... just afraid of what's gonna happen in a couple of minutes and I know how mad you were and how much you hurt inside" -- she was sobbing so hard she could barely get the words out -- "and I wish that my loving you helped more right now... I know that it doesn't but I don't know what else... what else to say. I love you, hon. I love you so much."

"I love you, too. But don't you worry none about what's gonna happen to you. I figure that I'm gonna have a second or two right as they throw the switch before the current kicks in, and I think there might be something I can do to show you that... that..." He was staring to cry again.

"To show me what, hon?"

"To show you that not everyone has to smell the puke. You don't deserve any of this. I'll always watch over you. And I'll always hold your memory close." A beat. "I gotta go."

"But we haven't..."

"Goodbye, mom. Your lovin' me always counted for a lot."

He hung up.

Edna sat there stunned for what seemed an eternity. Then she put the receiver back in the cradle, crossed to the chair, and buried herself in the comforter.

8:57.

They'd be taking him out of the cell now, walking him down to the room where the chair waited. The priest would be at his side, reading something from the Scripture. She hoped that Alan would confess to the priest and the priest would offer him some kind of comfort.

She looked at the pictures on the mantel. Alan at nine, at thirteen, at twenty-one. Not smiling in any of them. As she stared at the photographs Edna thought hard, her mind going over all the photographs that she'd taken of Alan and his father over the years. She couldn't remember either of them ever smiling. Too much on their minds.

9:00.

They'd have him in the room now, would be putting him in the chair, strapping him in, hooking everything up, sliding that black bag over his head so the witnesses wouldn't have to see his eyes bulge out when the power hit.

Her stomach cramped.

Outside, the sound of doors opening, voices echoing, footsteps nearing.

She pressed herself into the chair and sobbed with quiet violence. The comforter held only coldness and isolation.

3

The bell jingled again, and Hank turned to see Bill and Eunice Wright come inside with their children in tow.

"I was beginning to wonder," he said.

Eunice fixed him with an apologetic stare. "Kids wanted to stop at the playground for a few minutes. We couldn't say no."

"I understand." And Hank did. If he'd been a family man, he wouldn't have been able to refuse his children, either.

Not today.

Not now.

Not after--

Marge snapped her fingers in front of his eyes, startling him from his reverie.

"They're in their booth," she said. "You got everything ready?"

"Two burgers, two fries, two kiddie platters."

Marge swept the plates onto her serving tray. "Tell me again why you wanted us all in these same places."

Hank looked up.

9:02.

"It wasn't all his fault, you know?"

"I know," said Marge. "But there ain't nothing we can do about it now. Hindsight is always twenty-twenty."

Hank looked at her. "Best be serving the food before it gets cold."

"If I'd wanted a man to boss me around, I'd have gotten married."

"Should've married me when I asked you."

A sad shadow across her face. "I know that." She touched his cheek, glanced at the clock, and took the food over to the booth.

4

Edna sat upright as someone threw a stone through a window.

Not hers.

Another window shattered.

Not hers.

Some cats started fighting. A dog snarled. Someone yelled "Fuck you!"

9:02.

She shivered.

... sometimes it gets so much puke stuck in its throat that it's gotta spit a little out and give people a taste of what they done to it . . .

She looked at the pictures on the mantel. She must have been imagining things a moment before. The tears must have played tricks on her sight--

--because there was Alan smiling at her; at nine, thirteen, twenty-one.

The silence was deafening.

She rose and shuffled toward the front window, pulled back the curtain, and peeked outside.

There must have been fifty people standing outside; some on her lawn, others along the street, still more on the porches of their own homes. Not moving, not saying anything, just looking toward her house.

The three teenagers from earlier stood near her front steps. After a moment they saw her peering out and stepped forward.

"Gonna spew chunks."

"That's what's waitin' for us."

"Never stop making us pay for what we done to it."

The one in the middle was holding a pistol.

Edna scanned the scene once more and saw that almost everyone else had some kind of weapon; knives, pipes, shotguns . . .

She began to shake.

"It's not my fault," she whispered. "Leave me be."

The teenager in the middle turned and shot the boy on his right through the side of the head, then did the same to the one on his left before shoving the barrel into his own mouth and spewing his brain out the back of his skull; the wet, red mess flopped to the pavement, followed by his body.

Someone else thrust a knife deep into the groin of the person standing nearest.

Another person swung down with a lead pipe, spraying pulp.

A man up the street opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle, dropping at least ten people before swinging in the other direction.

Machine-gun fire in the distance. Howls of inhuman suffering.

More windows broke.

Snarling dogs leapt at one another's throats.

Cars with screaming, smoking tires flew down the street, smashing into people whose bodies careened off the hoods and splattered against the sidewalk in mangled, bloody pieces.

More people came running, wielding guns and knives and pipes and tire irons--

--but none made a move toward Edna and her lonely, cold house.

She collapsed against the wall, not able to look any longer.

Let them.

Let them do it.

Smell the puke. Breathe it in deep. Taste it. Drink it down and feel a bellyful of sick.

Her husband was gone. Her son would be dead in--
... tick-a-tick-a-tick ...

--less than one minute. She was alone and poor. She didn't care.

God, honey, how I wish I could be with you.

Then something occurred to her.

9:04:15.

She ran into the bathroom, grabbed the blow dryer Alan had given her four years ago at Christmas, and turned it on.

9:04:29.

She turned on the water in the sink, splashing a good puddle onto the floor, then opened both faucets full-throttle.

9:04:45.

My son, my good boy.

She kicked off her slippers and stepped into the puddle, gripped the blow dryer in both hands--

-- tick-a-tick-a-tick --

-- 9:04:55 --

-- and simultaneously turned it on while holding it under the pouring water.

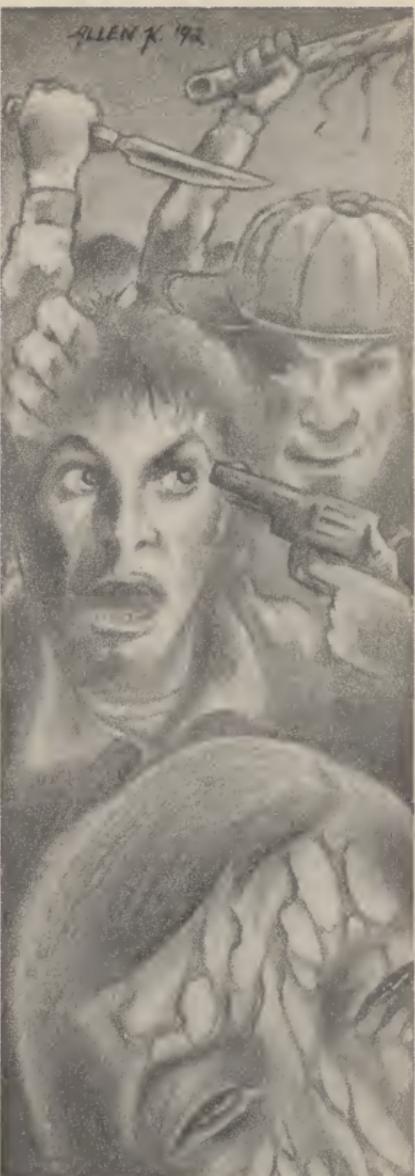
... tick-a-tick-my-son-my-good-boy ...

A buzz.

A hiss.

The smell of burning flesh.

The stench of puke.



9:05 arrived and passed.

Hank stood at the counter, looking out the window.

In their booth, the Wrights ate quietly.

Hank glanced in their direction, wondering if the children had ever gotten the chance to see a real live circus, one with elephants and trapeze artists and lion tamers and clowns, not the type going on in the distant streets of town.

Marge was next to him then, holding his hand.

"I didn't think I'd be afraid when the time came." Her voice was less than a baby's breath. "But I am."

"We'll know any second now."

They looked into each other's eyes and smiled. The door opened. The bell jingled.

Edna stood at the far end of the counter.

Hank crossed to her and smiled. "I didn't expect to see you."

Edna looked around, confused. "Where's . . . I thought that . . . oh, Lordy . . ."

Marge came around and took Edna gently by the arm. "You want some coffee, hon?"

"But--"

The bell jingled again.

Everyone turned to see Alan in the doorway, his eyes full of tears.

"Oh, God, mom, why'd you do it?"

Edna started toward him but froze when she looked at what he was holding in his hands.

Hank took a breath, held it, knew he'd never let it out.

"I was right, mom," choked Alan as he lifted the rifle. "It's a horrible, ugly thing, and it hates us so much."

He pointed the barrel straight at Hank. "It wasn't all my fault."

"I know," whispered Hank.

"Thank you," replied Alan as he pulled the trigger--

--*tick-a--*

--swung toward Marge and pulled it again--

--*tick-a--*

--and again--

--*tick-a-tick-a . . .*

6

Smell the puke. Breathe it in deep. Drink it down and feel a bellyful of sick.

7

Some mornings Hank swore he could still see blood on the clock's pendulum.

-- CD

A Monthly Newsletter
Published by Black Orchid Books
For The Serious Collector/Investor
of
Science Fiction • Horror • Fantasy

IMAGINATIVE
*
INVESTOR

The IMAGINATIVE INVESTOR will premiere in July 1992 and will be issued monthly.
No frills, no ads, no chatter.

The IMAGINATIVE INVESTOR will:

- Inform you concerning what's coming out and how to order
- Keep you apprised concerning future projects of merit from all specialty publishers in the U.S. and the U.K.
- Provide you with information concerning titles we believe to be the best investment—as well as a great addition to your collection.
- And much more...

A special pre-publication subscription to readers of *Cemetery Dance* of \$38 per year (12 Issues) will be accepted through May 1992—\$48 thereafter.

Please make checks payable to:

Black Orchid Books, 661 Salem Street, Malden, MA 02148

LAST CALL

by

TIM POWERS

Ten years ago Scott Crane quit playing poker professionally — and hasn't been to Las Vegas or held a hand of cards since.

But now he's having nightmares about a strange poker game that took place on a houseboat on Lake Mead in 1969. The game in which he won a fortune twenty years ago is, in a supernatural sense, not finished yet. The money he took home was actually in exchange for his life. And there's one hand yet to be played, one last terrible bet to be called, and he will have to wager everything.

From the poker clubs of Los Angeles — through the mythic waste land of the Mojave Desert — to Bugsy Siegel's magical city of Las Vegas — Crane's odyssey leads him to one more poker game, a game that involves tarot cards and the souls of the players more than the money on the table.

Full Color Art by
Peter Richardson

- First Edition
- Limited to 350 Copies
- Signed by Tim Powers
- The Author's Original Text
- Exquisitely Printed on Mohawk Vellum
- Bound in Pictorial Boards
- 576 Pages

\$150



A unique 26-copy lettered edition
is also available—Please inquire.

Release Date: February, 1992
Payment must accompany all orders.
Add \$4.00 for the first book and \$1.00
for each additional book.

P.O. Box 633
Lynbrook, New York 11563
(516) 887-2565

COMING THIS FALL—BEASTCHILD BY DEAN R. KOONTZ



CHARLES L.
GRANT

RAMBLINGS FROM THE DARK #15

On Clearing A Space In The Attic For Stuff I Don't Need Now But Might Need Someday, Who Knows:

I have this penchant for saving things, putting them away in a safe place, and usually forgetting where they are about five minutes later. I'm not talking about old magazines, old books, coins, artwork, stuff that might actually become valuable someday. I mean really important things -- like perfectly good nails that I've pulled from a collapsing bookcase, straightened out with my trusty hammer, and stuck in a drawer. Just in case. Things like those weirdly-shaped blocks of styrofoam (or whatever) that come in packing cases; they look too useful to toss out even though I haven't the faintest idea what possible use they could be, but I keep them around anyway. Just in case. Things like rubber bands swiped off copy-edited manuscripts and galleys, and not always mine either, which rubber bands are thick and sturdy and what the hell, why waste them by sending them back when . . . Just in case.

Things like snippets of conversation and sketches of descriptions and "what if?" situations that have nothing to do with anything going on at the moment, but they sound pretty good so why not note them down somewhere? Just in case.

For example:

Have you ever noticed that writers can't read when they don't

want to? Every writers' organization that I've ever belonged to has a published set of rules and policy that are generally given to the membership a zillion times a year, and yet these organizations still get a zillion complaining letters wanting to know why this isn't being done, why that was done, and who the hell are you to tell me what I do, I'm a big boy/girl now and don't need your bull. Try to tell these generally reasonable purveyors of truth, beauty, and positive language reinforcement that all the answers to all their questions can always be found in such-and-such a place, a zillion times a year, all they have to do is pay attention and read, and they get all bent out of shape. Yet every damn one of them knows what's in their contracts, I'll bet. Fascinating. Frustrating as hell, but fascinating.

In that same vein, you may have noticed that writers are also selective readers. Show one writer an interview with another writer, and the first thing he's going to do (and die before he'll admit it) is skim the pages to see if he's mentioned. Same with articles on his particular field, reviews (especially of anthologies), and commentary. If his name isn't there, he may or may not read the piece anyway, and will probably be insulted, hurt, or really ticked off that he's been left out; however, if his name is there, but it isn't blindingly

prominent, or the cause of some formative revelation to the interviewee, or noted as a continuing major force in the field, he'll probably be insulted, hurt, or really ticked off.

The writer's ego is a fragile and nasty beast -- you bruise it at your peril.

Which is why I, and many others who desire to live long and healthy lives with all our parts intact, have decided to try *not* to answer loaded questions like, "Who do you see as the best of the new writers?" (leave one lousy name out, and you're dead meat on a funeral platter); or "Who's your favorite writer?" (you always answer, "Me" to that one, because if you're not your favorite writer, why are you writing in the first place; then you go on to name anyone you like, as long as he's dead); or "How would you rate your contemporaries?" (go ahead, just pull the trigger and get it over with).

Like the Forrester Sisters say in their new song, "Men. You can't live with 'em, and you just can't shoot 'em." Egos are the same -- they're a bitch to keep in check, they're hell when they get the best of you, but they're also what keeps you going when times are tough and you know *damn well* you can do it, by god, and nobody, but nobody, is going to stop you from doing it. No matter how strongly you believe in humility, grace, and diplomacy, a little arrogance once in a while is good for the soul.

It may even help keep you humble.

Ever notice that a writer is like a shark when a new editor walks into the room? Big smile, lots of teeth, how ya doin', good to see ya, lovely dress, nice suit, where the hell'd you get that tie, can I talk to you later I've got this idea I'd like to try out on you but only if you have a minute I know you're busy.

Circling.

Always circling.

Scares the hell out of some editors, believe me.

On the other hand, some experienced editors are like sharks too, watching the schools of nervous writers scatter in their wake at a party, then close in ever so slowly, ever so warily. It can become what used to be called a power trip, and more than one editor (or writer, for that matter) has overindulged on it.

Circling.

Always circling.

If you stand off in a corner and just watch, it beats "Studs" all to hell.

Until, of course, it's your turn.

This being a Presidential election year, I've decided to vote for the first candidate who offers a tax credit to families who buy books for themselves and/or their kids. Not just any old books, though. The classics are disqualified because you can't get them for free in school if you're quick enough and the teacher isn't looking; and so are best-sellers, because most of them are discounted anyway and I haven't written one. I'm talking about *our* books, the books that make up the bulk of the publishing industry, the books that start kids reading, or help them along, or get them interested in writing or traveling or studying or whatever. I'm talking about books that saddle up the reader and ride him the hell out of the passive desert of endless television sitcoms and into the rugged, sometimes frightening, sometimes fabulous, sometimes exhilarating mountains of the

imagination.

The trouble is, politicians use cue cards. Written by someone else. In big letters. With short words.

Don't you think, those of you who are old enough, that life was a lot simpler during the Cold War?

In those days, anything went wrong, we always blamed it on the Russians, from lousy weather to natural disasters to the Red Sox blowing yet another World Series to every little war that sprouted in countries we never heard of and who changed their names every three weeks anyway, depending on who held the capital at the time.

Of course, we also hid under our desks during atomic bomb air raid drills so the glass wouldn't cut us.

Actually, now that I think about it, things really haven't changed all that much. Today we blame our parents, society, the government, the Japanese (this week), and the stars (For God's sake) for all our shortcomings. Take personal responsibility for our own actions and faults? What a novel concept. Used to be, taking the fall was what gods and the Russians were for. Now that the gods are gone and what's left of the Russians are supposedly on our side, it's very confusing to a lot of people.

It's like all the mirrors in the world all got broken at the same time. Except mine, of course; I just don't bother to look in it. I know what I look like in the morning, and believe me, that's probably a major reason why I write what I do.

Unless, of course, it's the Russians.

True story: for one week this winter there was a law in New Jersey banning the serving of eggs over easy.

There are many ways to gauge the political climate of a particular metropolitan area, but in my experience the most reliable, and certainly more fun than reading a newspaper, is checking the *Yellow Pages* of the

hotel phone book for the number of massage parlors/escort services being advertised. It works every time. A few years ago, on one of my first trips to Chattanooga, there were at least five pages of them. The following year, there was one, and very tiny at that. I asked around and learned that a preacher had unearthed a 19th Century law banning something or other, and demanded that the city enforce it. Since the city couldn't be seen actually endorsing such horrid, disgusting, vile, foul, unnatural behavior, it threw out the massage parlors and escort services, most of which promptly moved five minutes away to Georgia and are thriving, I'm pleased to report.

Another true story: unless it's now out of business because I haven't been to Georgia for a while, there was a massage parlor ad in the *Atlanta Yellow Pages* that, I swear to you, included a notice that read, "We give hand signals for the deaf."

One of the wonderful things about language is that no matter how careful you are when you say something, sooner or later and probably sooner, somebody, somewhere, is going to take offense. This will be true for the comment about the massage parlors now moved to Georgia. It will also be increasingly true as those who claim to be enhancing education continue to debase the language by making English "easier to understand" by making words mean what they don't mean, and making other words lose their shades of meaning. Most writers are damn careful about the words they choose, and how they arrange them. Most writers know full well the difference between "infer" and "imply", even if Random House doesn't. Most writers understand that simplifying language does not, by any stretch of the imagination, guarantee improved communication, which is what writing is all about anyway.

I don't say "scarlet" when I mean "crimson"; I don't say "love"

when I mean "lust"; I don't say "experience" (especially, for God's sake, "past experience") when I mean "wisdom". And I sure as hell don't say "handicapped" when I mean "crippled".

This isn't as trivial as some would have the young believe; in fact, it isn't trivial at all. You can't say what you mean if there aren't the words to say it; you can't communicate an idea or tell an effective story if communication is hobbled; you cannot expect readers to join you on that marvelous ride I mentioned above if, at the same time, you permit

others to dilute, and thus destroy, the incredible, perhaps even miraculous, richness that makes language what it is, what it should be.

If you let them do it to your book, your poem, your story, you've not joined the enemy, you've become one of the dead.

A friend of mine took exception to a comment I made a few columns ago about not being able to get a decent Bloody Mary in a Chinese restaurant, so he took me, while I was in California last summer, to a Chinese restaurant and dared me to

order a Bloody Mary.

Boy, was he smug.

Boy, was the Bloody Mary lousy.

The sweet-and-sour chicken was pretty good, though.

So what, if anything, does half this rambling have to do with writing, dark fantasy, and publishing? Beats me. Something, I guess. I'm just clearing space in the attic for these things, because you never know.

Just in case.

Winner
1991 World Fantasy
Life Achievement Award



While They Last The Autographed First Edition of Ray Russell's Major New Horror Novel

ABSOLUTE POWER

Sardonicus...Incubus...The Case Against Satan...Ray Russell's accomplishments in horror and the Gothic are legendary in book and film. Now this first executive editor of *Playboy* returns to the novel form with *Absolute Power*, a chilling tale of witchcraft, sex, voodoo, extortion, and sorcery. "Perhaps the finest example of the modern Gothic ever written."—Stephen King, of *Sardonicus*. "Remarkable...superb...masterful..."—The Washington Star of *Incubus*. "Staggering...filled with the dark powers of life and mind."—Kirkus Reviews, of *The Case Against Satan*. Now...*Absolute Power*. Not to be missed!

500 numbered and autographed copies only, hardcover, boxed, \$49.
The only autographed edition of a Ray Russell novel.

From your specialty bookseller, or send check or money order plus

\$1 shipping per book to: MACLAY & ASSOCIATES, Publishers
P.O. Box 16253
Baltimore, MD 21210

Also available: *Haunted Castles: The Complete Gothic Tales of Ray Russell*, trade hardcover, \$12.95.



BARRY R. LEVIN SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY LITERATURE

726 SANTA MONICA BLVD., SUITE 201, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA 90401
(310) 458-6111 EST. 1973



A SMALL SAMPLE FROM OUR STOCK:

RAREST CLARKE

CLARKE, ARTHUR C. *Reach for Tomorrow*. Ballantine Books, New York. [1956]. First edition, hardcover state. The hardcover state of this book is considered to be the author's rarest book and one of the rarest Ballantine hardcover books. Dust jacket has three short tears, top and bottom of dust jacket's spine show wear, pages brown as usual otherwise very good in dust jacket. One of the better examples of this book to turn up in recent years.

AN ARKHAM HOUSE RARITY

DRAKE, LEAH BODINE. *A Hornbook for Witches: Poems of Fantasy*. Arkham House, Saug City. 1950. First edition. Top and bottom of dust jacket's spine and edges show a little bit of wear otherwise fine in dust jacket. 2,000.00

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT

HEINLEIN, ROBERT A. *Untitled, unpublished short story*. Written by Heinlein in letter form to thank the editors of a collection of Cyborg stories for dedicating their book to him. Original ribbon-copy typescript. Signed "Bob." Two 8 1/2 x 11-inch leaves, typed single space, on the author's stationery. Written in 1975, the story takes the form of a letter of complaint from X-Model 69-606-ZSCCC-75-RAH (formerly Robert A. Heinlein) to the Complex Cyborg Corporation and deals with the malfunctioning of the genitalia of his new Cyborg body. At the end of the epistolary story there is a postscript from Heinlein thanking the editors for the dedication. With a photograph of the author. The two leaves of manuscript and the photograph are very handsomely matted, employing a three-opening liner mat with black and burgundy fillets, under glass, with a hardwood frame with burgundy highlights. The frame measures approximately 25 x 24 1/2 inches. Heinlein manuscripts virtually never come on the market. (The purchase of this manuscript conveys ownership of the physical manuscripts only and does not convey any copyright or right of publication. Not for sale to minors.) A very handsome display piece and a unique Heinlein item for the Heinlein collector who thought he had everything. 2,500.00

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

HUBBARD, L. RON. *The Battle of the Wizards*. Original ribbon-copy typescript, final draft, setting copy. Thirteen 8 1/2 x 11-inch green-paper leaves. Written c. 1949. Approximately 4,550 words. Foliated and complete. This story was published in *Triton and Battle of Wizards*. Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc., Los Angeles. 1949. The manuscript shows mailing folds, some light dust soiling otherwise near fine consistent with age. The manuscript leaves are in acid-free mylar sleeves and are contained in a portfolio with ribbon ties. L. Ron Hubbard manuscripts in private hands are very rare.

with

Photocopies of three letters of provenance which trace the ownership of the manuscript back to its original owner. 45,000.00

MANUSCRIPT

HUBBARD, L. RON. *He Found G-d*. Carbon-copy typescript (with a few lines of ribbon-copy typescript), final draft, setting copy. Eighteen 8 1/2 x 11-inch leaves. Written in 1946. Approximately 5,000 words. Complete. The first two lines of this manuscript read: "I have found G-d!" From Marfax to Markab, from Vega to Venturi, to planet and asteroid and star, fled the fateful statement." The use of the star MARKAB (a star in the Pegasus constellation) in this story by Hubbard is significant because of its importance to the inner-circle teachings of Scientology. This story was published for the first time in 1982 in the first issue of *META SF* magazine. Paper-clip rust stains on a few leaves, tips of corners of first two leaves missing (no text lost), a few leaves show a little fraying otherwise near fine consistent with age. Each leaf is contained in an acid-free mylar sleeve, the manuscript is housed in a portfolio with ribbon ties.

with

Photocopies of two letters of provenance which trace the ownership of the manuscript to the person who bought it from the original owner. 35,000.00

MANUSCRIPT SETTING COPY SIGNED BY HUBBARD

HUBBARD, L. RON. *Man Eats Monster* (published in this version under the title "Triton"). Original ribbon-copy typescript and tear sheet, final draft, setting copy. Ten 8 1/2 x 11-inch typed leaves and forty-two leaves (eighty-four pages) of printed tear sheets from the British edition of the April 1940 issue of *Unknown*. Complete. This is the manuscript setting copy for the c.1949 rewrite of "The Indigestible Triton" which was originally published in magazine form under the pseudonym of Rene Lafayette in 1940. This rewrite was done for the 1949 first (book) edition of *Triton and Battle of Wizards* by L. Ron Hubbard, published by Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc. in Los Angeles. In order to do this rewrite, Hubbard wrote new sections for the story and copy-edited tear sheets from the British magazine appearance, thus creating a new "manuscript." The tear sheets show many deletions and some notes in Hubbard's hand. At the bottom left-hand corner of page "3" of the tear sheets, Hubbard has written, "Note 18" and signed his name in full, through which he has then drawn a line. The first and last typed leaves show a little browning, mailing folds, crease in last leaf, tear sheets brown otherwise near fine consistent with age. The manuscript leaves are in acid-free mylar sleeves; the manuscript is contained in a portfolio with ribbon ties. L. Ron Hubbard manuscripts in private hands are quite rare.

with

Photocopies of three letters of provenance which trace the ownership of the manuscripts back to its original owner. 50,000.00

THE FIRST COPY RELEASED AND PERHAPS THE ONLY COPY OF THE TRUE FIRST EDITION OF THE UNCUT STAND

KING, STEPHEN. *The Stand: The Complete & Uncut Edition*. Doubleday, New York. [1990]. First complete American trade edition, first binding state. (The American trade edition was set from different type than the limited edition, it was also bound and issued prior to the limited edition.) This copy is the first copy released by the publisher and may very well be the only certifiable copy of the first edition, first binding state extant. It was shipped by Doubleday to a Stephen King bio-bibliographer on 2/22/90. This copy's release (and this copy only) appears to precede the early release of the British copies. This, the first copy sent out by the publisher, is, according to an executive at Doubleday: "A one-of-a-kind — we had to go back with all those books [400,000 copies of the first trade edition] and have the endpapers more firmly secured. You'll notice in this edition that the red endpaper is glued up to the next page quite a bit — your first copy should not have that same distinction. Yours is the only book that was kept out of that first run — a true collectors' edition." Fine in dust jacket.

with

A signed letter of provenance on Doubleday letterhead from an executive at Doubleday, a signed letter of provenance from the book's original recipient and the original Federal Express package label dated 2/22/90. 3,000.00

RUSHDIE, SALMAN. *The Satanic Verses*. Viking. [London]. [1988]. First edition, (Arabic) numbered state. Limited to 100 signed and (Arabic) numbered copies. Quarter leather bound. Fine in plain-paper dust jacket as issued. 1,750.00

THE MANUSCRIPT FOR AMBER #10

ZELAZNY, ROGER. *Prince of Chaos (Amber #10)*. Original ribbon-copy typescript, first draft. Two hundred and one 8 1/2 x 11-inch leaves, typed double space. Signed on first leaf and signed again on last leaf with a type note, "Mon. eve. 8/29, 1 April 1991." (The date and time the manuscript was completed.) Corrections throughout in the author's hand. Foliated and complete. With a signed letter of provenance. Near fine.

2,000.00

CANDY BARS FOR ELVIS

NORMAN PARTRIDGE

NORMAN PARTRIDGE's short stories have appeared in *Cemetery Dance* many times, including last issue's reader favorite, "Apotropaics." Look for other Partridge fiction in *Dark At Heart*, *Shivers*, and *The Earth Strikes Back*.

This guy had the sneer, all right. It slithered like a pink snake around a little black cigar, the skinny kind He favored but never smoked in public.

I leaned against the wall of the recording studio that had once been a warehouse, just watching him. Then I got tired of watching and stepped from the shadows into the dim light, my motorcycle boots heavy on the wooden loading dock.

A startled little puff of smoke escaped from his nose. "You almost scared me to death," he said, and I smiled because he'd forgotten the accent.

He squinted. Like I said, there wasn't much light. Then he really saw me. My face, that is. "This some kind of a joke?" he wanted to know.

I stood there and let him sweat. I was a real piece of work. The Kentucky rain had sopped me pretty good, and I hadn't shaved since leaving Denver. The blade in the Schick injector that had seen me through Vietnam was so damn dull that it wasn't worth bothering with. And the way things were going money-wise, cheap burgers and jelly donuts were what my budget demanded, not little niceties like fresh toiletries.

"Okay. A joke's a joke." The sneering man flicked his cigar into a puddle and turned to the door.

Even with the rain, my mouth was as dry as a schoolmarm's cunt. I worked up some spit that got my tongue to tasting like burnt tinfoil and croaked, "I -- I've been listening. You can still hit the high notes, and that's a fact."

He stopped cold. Maybe it was just the sound of my voice. Sometimes it can do that to folks. Or maybe it was what I said.

Or maybe he could smell the burnt tinfoil.

His hand slid off the knob. He spoke softly, remembering the accent this time. Even the little stutter. "I -- I'm glad to see that you're a real fan."

I didn't want to scare him again, so I didn't say anything. Just nodded.

He looked me over, and his eyes froze when he saw my neck. "H -- hard times, huh?"

Again, I nodded.

He fished a twenty from his pocket and filled my hand. "There's a store down the road. Little ol' mom-and-pop joint. How about you run down there and get me a couple candy bars? You can keep the change."

I heard him, but not real clearly -- I was too busy looking at his hands.

He wore black gloves. A silver guitar was stitched on one, a musical note on the other. Rhinestones, or diamonds, outlined both.

I looked him in the eye, letting a sneer of my own raise one cheek, like I was smart enough to understand.

He nodded. "Gloves don't leave no fingerprints. Make sense, son?" He slapped my back with a big leather paw and sent me into the cold Kentucky rain. And then he hollered after me, "Most folks think I'm dead, remember?"

I sat in my car and stared at the twenty. I figured it'd buy a lot of cheeseburgers and a lot of jelly donuts. Even one of those cheap pizzas from that Domino's joint, though I didn't know how He felt about pizza.

I was tempted to stuff the money in my pocket and go.

I'd done worse. And skipping with the twenty wasn't anything next to what Black Gloves was doing. Raindrops tapped on the hood of my rusty old Cadillac and I thought about it. Andy Jackson stared up at me, anticipating my decision with appropriate solemnity.

Egypt wouldn't like me taking off, though. If I did that, it would mean we were quits, and I'd have to cross Denver off my road-map. No more visits to her little place in South Clarkson. No more feeling her hands on me while I stared up at His black velvet portrait.

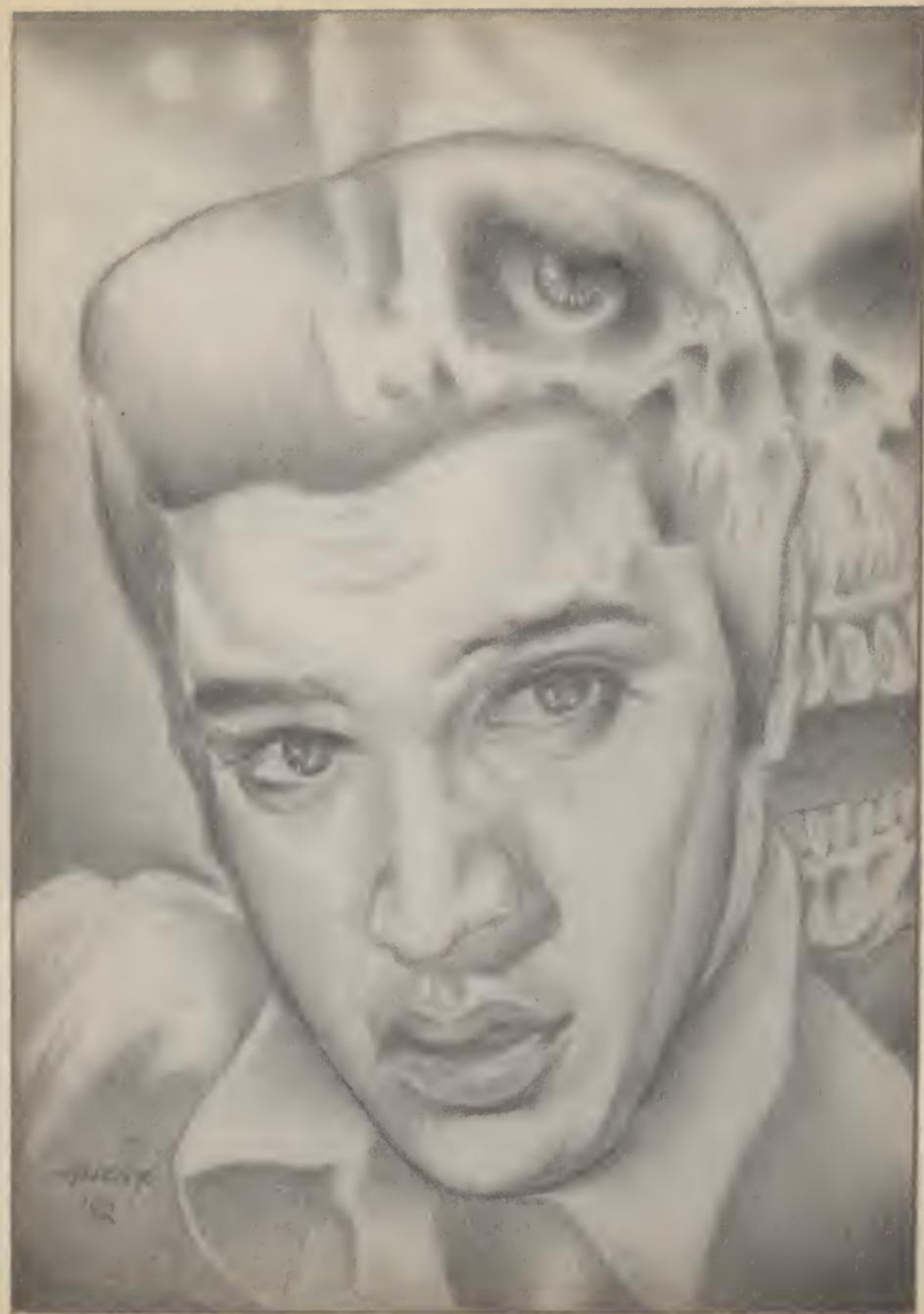
Egypt's voice came back to me: "I heard about this fella from a gal in one of the Kentucky fan clubs . . ."

Above me, on the bedroom wall, the velvet microphone in His hand. *Run your fingers through my hair . . .*

"This fella's been lettin' folks see him, playin' cat and mouse games . . ."

A knowing grin on His face. *Cuddle me real tight . . .*

"And he's actually makin' records. This fella wants to leech money from the true fans. Just like that writer who said He's still travelin' around the country, usin' that



name from one of his movies . . . "

Egypt's fingers, traveling everywhere, real slow and nice.

I almost sang it. "I don't want to be your tiger, 'cause tigers play too rough." But I couldn't sing anymore, and it wasn't any good just saying it.

Besides, it would have been a lie. Egypt made me feel real good, and I would have done just about anything to keep it that way. So I just stared up at His face, thinking about her soft, black velvet touch.

Her fingers went everywhere. Everywhere but the scars on my neck.

No one touched those.

No one touched His sacred marks.

I looked away from the Cadillac as soon I stepped out of it. It was pretty-well rusted. The new paint job hadn't helped any, but that was my own fault. After my visit with the writer who had claimed He was still alive, I'd made the mistake of celebrating at a bar that was across the street from a paint store. I'm here to tell you: whatever the problem, pink Rustoleum isn't the solution.

Anyway, Black Gloves was right about one thing: the store was definitely a mom-and-pop operation. Tonight, Pop was working. He didn't pay me any mind, though. Monday Night Football.

I looked at the magazines, enjoying the fact that the old guy kept the place pretty toasty. I dried off a little, flipped plenty of pages, but nothing really interested me. The guys in the rock 'n' roll magazines had hair that was prettier than Egypt's. And that's saying something, because Egypt's hair is done up in one of those spider's nest bouffants. It's really something to see.

The donuts were next to the magazines. I got a box, then took a pint of milk from the fridge case. As the glass door whispered closed, I caught sight of my reflection.

Black sideburns. Thick whiskers between 'em.

Whiskers that didn't do a damn thing to hide the scars on my neck.

It always upsets me to see my neck. I eased down the far aisle, palmed a pack of razor blades, and tucked them into my jeans.

Like I said, I've done worse things.

I remembered the candy bars just as a commercial interrupted the game. Some jock pitching -- you guessed it -- razor blades. The old guy looked up from the register and saw me for the first time.

"Kiss my ass," he said. "You look just like Him."

Tinfoil sizzled underneath my tongue. "Don't sound like Him, though. Not anymore."

Pop looked away, his old lips sagging like he'd torn away Christmas wrap and found nothing but a big turd. I walked out -- the plastic pack of razor blades jabbing my crotch, the familiar sneer spreading across my face -- and climbed into the Caddy that was the color of an old scar.

**

The Caddy's worn wipers couldn't do much against the pouring rain. I popped a cassette into the tape deck. *Gold Records Volume 4*. "It Hurts Me."

I did pretty well after He died. I even had a manager. Smart little fellow I'd known since high school. He got me out of the Chicago legion halls and into the Vegas casinos, a move that made me feel like dreams could come true.

That was when things started to fall apart. I guess His songs say it all. "Girls! Girls! Girls!" and "Burning Love." And then, when things got weird and black, "Way Down."

I'm ashamed of the stuff I did in Vegas. But I never actually bought the drugs. And I swear that those women asked me to do those things to them. For the most part, they enjoyed every minute.

For the most part. That doesn't make it right, though.

Anyway, that's when the cancer came. The doctors burst it out, of course. They said that I could live a full life. Just so long as I didn't mind the dry mouth, the taste of burnt tinfoil.

It's funny. Even then, I knew that the cancer was a sign. My own personal flaming star, sent directly from Him. You see, He didn't want me to end up the same way He had. It was a simple case of caring. Pure TCB.

Now, that's love with a capital "L."

That's when I really changed. I couldn't perform, of course, but I still wanted to be like Him. The way He should have been. The way He was in those movies -- pure and good and right like no other man could be.

I spent the next couple of years working some of the same jobs He'd had in those movies. I was driving truck for a carnival, thinking of *Roustabout*, when I met Egypt. She was a dancer in counties where we couldn't buy the law and a stripper in counties where we could. Not young, not beautiful, but she knew how to use what she had and took good care of it. I laid eyes on her and it was love, just like the song says: *I went and bought myself a ticket and I sat down in the very first row . . .*

At first, she was drawn by my looks. But she didn't turn away when she saw my scars, and she didn't flinch when she heard my voice.

See, she understood His love better than I did.

We were happy for a while. Quit the carnies life. I drove truck and she settled in Denver. Then things started happening that we didn't like. It seemed like every time we heard His name, someone was trying to make a fast buck.

They were turning Him into a joke.

We didn't think it was funny.

We followed his motto. TCB.

Takin' care of business.

**

"Took you long enough," Black Gloves said. "I'm damn near starvin'."

I handed over the candy bars. One of His songs ran through my head. "You're the Devil in Disguise." Suddenly, I felt kind of dizzy, like I might faint.

"Whoa, boy. Whoa." Black Gloves steadied me.

"H -- hard times," I croaked.

Black Gloves patted my back and sent me into the Kentucky rain one last time. Just like I'd hoped, I heard the sound of paper tearing as he moved slowly through the darkness. I ran halfway across the parking lot before I turned and hollered. "I -- I'll tell 'em that you're still around. I'll tell 'em you still care!"

Black Gloves had entered the building, and the

door had almost closed, but I caught his wink, and his words.

"You do that. You tell 'em that they gotta believe."

Then he was gone. I stood in the rain and rubbed my whiskers, feeling like the dark gunslinger He'd played in *Charro*.

I thought of candy bars. Razor blades.

Little bits of nougat. Little bits of steel.

When you come right down to it, it couldn't taste any worse than burnt tinfoil.

I hurried away, laughing so I wouldn't hear Black Gloves hit the raw, red note that He never touched.

For Wayne Allen Sallee

- CD



AVAILABLE NOW
**JOE R. LANSDALE'S
GOD OF THE RAZOR**

A SOFTCOVER CHAPBOOK LIMITED TO 500
NUMBERED COPIES, EACH SIGNED BY THE
AUTHOR.

FEATURING:

A NEW INTRODUCTION BY JOE R. LANSDALE

AND:

A GOD OF THE RAZOR PORTFOLIO

by: Stephen R. Bissette, Elman Brown,
A.C. Farley, Mark Masztal,
Mark Nelson, Timothy Truman,
S. Clay Wilson and Michael Zulli.

A VERY SPECIAL EDITION NOT TO BE MISSED!

\$15.00 POSTPAID

PLEASE MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: THOMAS CROUSS

SEND TO: CROSSROADS PRESS

PO. BOX 10433

HOLYOKE, MA. 01041-1833

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE ON PURCHASES OF 5 OR MORE COPIES. WRITE FOR DETAILS.

COMING SOON

NANCY COLLINS

COLD TURKEY

A NEW SONJA BLUE
NOVELLA BY AWARD
WINNING AUTHOR
NANCY A. COLLINS

INTRODUCTION BY
JOE R. LANSDALE

ARTWORK BY
MARK MASZTAL

A SOFTCOVER CHAPBOOK
LIMITED TO 500 COPIES
EACH SIGNED BY THE
AUTHOR AND ARTIST

EXPECTED PUBLICATION
DATE: JUNE 1992

WRITE FOR DETAILS



ED GORMAN

GORMANIA

Some of my readers phone me. Most of them are decent, articulate, well-adjusted people and, if I'm not too busy, I'm happy to spend some time with them on the phone. Without readers, I'd still be that most lowly of beings, the ad guy.

Notice I said "most" readers. Not all.

One night a very drunken woman called to confess to a murder. I still have no idea if she was telling the truth.

Another reader phoned to say that because of my "liberal" views I was going on certain mysterious "lists." I found this surprising because I'm actually rather conservative, even right-wing about many issues.

And because of my Jack Dwyer novels (women seem to like him), I've received a number of marriage proposals, each based on the fantasy that I'm just like Dwyer, which I'm not at all. He's a much nicer guy, for one thing.

But even given this background, nothing prepared me or my wife Carol for the call that came a few weeks ago.

When I picked up, a female voice asked if Carol was there. Something didn't sound right to me -- the woman sounded deadened in some way, physically or spiritually or both -- but I got Carol and then went back to my writing.

An hour or so later, Carol came into my office and said that the woman was a friend of hers from her high school days and that she felt sorry for her. The woman had never married and, at 40, was back living at home, in circumstances that Tennessee Williams would have found appalling.

She had called, Carol said, because she had an idea for a children's book and who better to run it past than her old friend, the writer? Especially since, her friend said, she'd read Carol's books and was such a fan.

She hadn't done much with her 40-year-old life, the woman said, but now...

The woman saw that this was her true calling, writing, and where before everything had been bleak, now everything would be shiny and fine and new. She would be a writer. Yes. Yes. Carol was as encouraging as possible but told her friend that the book idea needed some developing. Carol was very melancholy about the call. Here was a woman, she said, who'd been granted few favors by any of the known gods -- she was not attractive physically, her social skills were painful and primitive, and she was not even especially smart. Carol felt terrible for her and said she hoped that she'd made it clear to the woman that Carol would be glad to help her in any way she could with this writing

project. I said that I was sure the woman had appreciated Carol's interest.

Next morning, as I was lying in bed with our beautiful cat Tasha standing on my chest nuzzling me, Carol came in with the morning paper. She looked stricken. I knew instantly that something terrible had happened.

"Right after she called me last night," Carol said, "she took a gun and killed herself."

A few moments later Carol was on the bed next to me, sobbing. All I could do was hold her. There was absolutely nothing to say.

After a time we went to the kitchen where I made coffee. By now Carol had convinced herself she should have been nicer, more encouraging, should have invited her for lunch, asked her if she wanted to go to a symphony some time, or perhaps see some of their old friends--

She should have done something.

She should have done more.

She should have saved the woman from picking up the gun.

But she couldn't, of course, and after a few more hours of paralyzing depression and terrible sobbing, she tried to see what I was arguing -- that the woman had probably been planning suicide all along . . . and that in fact there was nothing

-- no word no deed no promise of any kind -- that could have kept her from her fate.

I suggested that we take a day off from writing (we were both in the homestretch on our novels) and go to see a "light" movie. (Alas, I chose *Father of the Bride*, a film so light and so bad, I don't think I'll ever be able to watch Martin Short again, his "gay" turn so inane and amateurish, it would probably get bounced from a high school variety show.)

Then we went out to eat. Then we did a little shopping. Then we went for a long walk.

Home again, a migraine coming on, Carol went to sleep and slept straight through.

**

Gradually, Carol has come to see that there was no way she could have "saved" the woman. Not even if she'd offered to collaborate with her on the proposed book.

To be honest, the most protective side of me resented the woman for calling Carol. She put a whole lot of responsibility on my wife's shoulders -- responsibility she didn't de-

serve. And was utterly unable to do anything about.

But after my anger, I started sharing some of Carol's sorrow. All of us know people who've led sad, dashed lives. And it seems so unfair when you see a Warren Beatty or a Madonna or a George Bush on a magazine cover and think how lucky some people are ... and how luckless so many lost souls have become in our time.

But we can't save them. Not as writers. Not as people.

I once corresponded with a man who'd been burned so badly that he seldom ventured out of the house. Too hideous. He'd read a "Daniel Ransom" novel of mine about a similarly disfigured man and felt I'd understand what he was trying to tell me. He said that he'd particularly admired a quote in the front of the book, from Marcus Aurelius, about "the consolation of philosophy." Sometimes, he said, that was the only consolation to be found on this earth ...

All I could think of was Nathaniel West's sad and brilliant little novel *Miss Lonelyhearts*, when the title character, a reporter who writes an "advice" column for the lost and desperate among us, begins to

suffer because of his own inability to help the people who beg him for advice ... He is the most convincing and powerful Christ-figure in world literature:

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts --

I am writing to you for my little sister Gracie because something awful happened to her and I am afraid to tell mother about it . . . Gracie is deaf and dumb and bigger than me but not very smart on account of being deaf and dumb . . . Last week a man came on the roof and did something dirty to her. She told me about it and I don't know what to do as I am afraid to tell mother on account of her being liable to beat Gracie up. I am afraid Gracie is going to have a baby and I listened to her stomach last night for a long time to see if I could hear the baby but I couldn't . . . So please what would you do if the same happened in your family.

*Yours truly,
Harold S.*

The consolation of philosophy.
Sometimes there doesn't seem to be much else.



Halloween, 1967, Seattle;

Not everything put into the ground stayed there.

NOW AVAILABLE! ORDER YOURS TODAY!
First Edition, "A Working Class Vampire"
Signed by the Author & Cover Designer
for only \$7.95 + \$1 S&H

Send Money Order to: Ice Dragon Press,
P.O. Box 17464, Seattle Wa., 98107

A CONVERSATION WITH DEAN R. KOONTZ

Conducted by TYSON BLUE

CEMETERY DANCE: Your new novel, *Hideaway*, deals in part with resuscitation science. What drew you to this topic? Was there much resource material available to research?

DEAN R. KOONTZ: A few years ago I read a couple of newspaper pieces about resuscitation medicine, related to the reanimation of a child who had been dead for sixty-six minutes before being brought back without brain damage. Oddly enough, considering the kind of thing I write, I didn't at that time realize the material was perfect for a novel. A couple of years went by. In the fall of '90, I was looking through my idea file, where I keep notes for future novels, searching for a storyline that would lend itself to the themes I was most interested in writing about at that time. I wanted to explore the nature of evil, whether it grows solely out of the actions of humankind or is also a real and separate force in the world, whether genetics or environment plays the largest role in creating human monsters, and whether good people can deal with evil and not lose the mercy and compassion that makes them good. I also wanted to touch upon how difficult it is for good people to deal with the most profound questions of life in an anti-religious age when "thinking" people are taught never even to consider these questions from a spiritual point of view. That day in '90, I went through everything in the idea file without finding a suitable story to carry those

themes in a complicated yet subtle fashion -- and suddenly the premise for *Hideaway* came to me fully developed. Obviously, the subconscious had been cooking for a couple of years, ever since I read those articles. When I went to the medical library at the University of California at Irvine to see what they had on resuscitation medicine, I discovered a wealth of material, a lot of it extremely technical but fascinating, more than enough to allow me to write credibly in the chapters during which Hatch Harrison is reanimated after being dead -- and severely hypothermic -- for eighty minutes.

CD: *Hideaway* is a suspense novel, a thriller, but some reviewers have also noted that it is surprisingly spiritual. Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

KOONTZ: Let's not turn readers off by giving them the idea this is a religious novel. It deals with spiritual as well as temporal issues, but it's not Jerry Falwell writing in the mode of Bram Stoker! I was raised a Protestant, converted to Catholicism, and later called myself an atheist. But a lot of life experience -- including more than my share of brushes with death -- has brought me around again, not full circle to a codified belief in one system of religious faith but to an awareness that there is more to life than what we see, mysteries perhaps unpierceable, a purpose to existence beyond pain and pleasure and mere survival. Let me make it clear

-- I haven't any patience for the New Age approach, either, for the seeking of enlightenment through healing crystals, "places of power" in the Southwestern deserts, and all that mumbo-jumbo. The only place any of us is going to find answers is within himself, and not in the unrestrained indulgence of emotion but in the long-term application of the intellect to the vital questions of existence. For instance, one of the things that has increased my rather simple faith that life has a purpose beyond the mere fact of existence is a lot of reading in modern physics, a vital branch of which has come around to the serious consideration that we do, in fact, live in a *created* universe, and that the existence of will cannot be discounted as an explanation for the fundamental workings of the universe.

CD: We both know that some would say that shaking off religion is the primary act that has brought us to an age of enlightenment.

KOONTZ: This is not an enlightened age. More people have been slaughtered in wars and domestic political bloodletting, tortured and abused more violently, during this century than in most others combined. Yes, scientific and technological progress (of which I am an unrelenting proponent) has given us a tremendously higher and healthier standard of living than previous generations. However, though we claim to be living in an anti-religious age,

the compulsion toward religious faith is irresistible, so we invest our blind trust not in God anymore but in horrifyingly fallible political and social systems like Communism. Have you ever seen any dogmatic religiosity any more fierce or brutal than a committed Communist determined to inflict his view on his neighbor? Even after more than seven decades have demonstrated beyond doubt that Communism doesn't work in any regard whatsoever, true believers in Peking will slaughter millions more to force continued worship at the altar of Marx and Mao.

CD: Yet *Hideaway* is one of the few novels of yours to have a truly supernatural background. Can you explain the preference, in spite of your own faith, for rational explanations for the fantastical events in your stories?

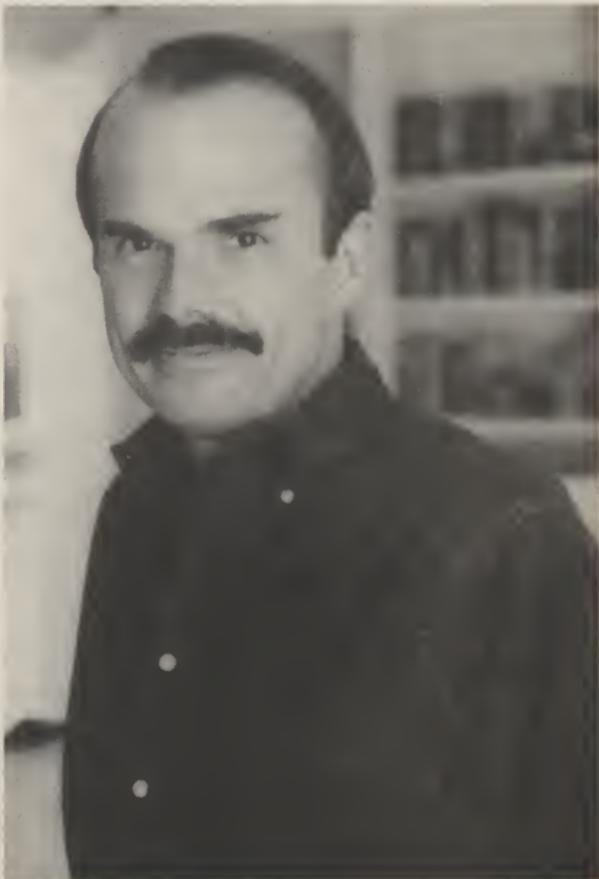
KOONTZ: Most supernatural storylines don't interest me because they have been done to death. Vampires, werewolves, zombies -- the usual villains are a dreary lot after so many decades of exploitation. In *Hideaway*, evil can be traced not merely to one shambling bloodsucker in a cape but to three sources: human behavior; the transmittal of sociopathic behavior through damaged genes, which is the most terrifying because it is the most arbitrary and relentless; and possibly to Evil as a supernatural force.

CD: Some people will wonder at the word "possibly."

KOONTZ: *Hideaway* is by no means a cut-and-dried supernatural story. I don't expect anyone to tumble to this immediately on first reading; the realization might sneak up on them long after the book has been put down -- but everything in it *could* be explained in a logical fashion, requiring the acceptance of only one small element of the fantastic. If you accept that Vassago acquired psychic power due to the brain damage suf-

fered before he was resuscitated by his father, Dr. Nyebern, and that he links up with Hatch because they are both beneficiaries of his father's genius, then you could read the rest of the story as merely the imposition of Vassago's religious fantasies on Hatch through telepathic transmission. In the end, when Hatch sees Vassago transformed into something non-human, perhaps he is only seeing Vassago as the demented Vassago sees himself, not as he really is; and when Hatch sees the benevolent presence within himself, perhaps he is seeing only a presence that Vassago, in the final throes of his perse-

cution fantasy, is *imagining*. If you think about it carefully enough, nothing in the book prevents the reader from embracing either the totally supernatural or the more logical interpretation of events. Which is why the final chapter begins with the story of the three blind men examining an elephant and interpreting its nature in three different fashions. That is a nudge to the thoughtful reader, a suggestion that there may be more than one way to read this novel, just as all the characters in the story are affected by events in different ways; and the way you interpret it on first pass may tell you something about



your own subconscious attitudes toward religious faith. To my surprise, my publisher's initial reaction was that she loved the story because it appeared to be about the supernatural and was not. She's a very knowledgeable and effective publisher, excellent at what she does, but she generally responds to plot and character and style, not to subtext and tricky thematic inversions, so I was more than a little worried that my game wasn't as sly as I thought it was and that everyone would grasp the possibility of the dual interpretation on first reading. But no one else has tumbled to it nearly as fast, and many people who read this, after reading the book, will grasp that duality only now that I've talked about it, which is all right; it's *supposed* to be a long-delayed time bomb.

CD: Which interpretation do you think is correct? Is Vassago merely living out his fantasies and drawing Hatch into them . . . or are there real supernatural forces at work?

KOONTZ: What do *you* think? If I reveal my point of view, I've compromised the mystery inherent in the dual interpretation I worked so hard to allow.

CD: Since vampires and other monsters of myth are perennially popular, and since you seldom *do* use supernatural storylines, has a publisher ever pressured you to write less realistically, with less rationalistic explanations?

KOONTZ: My publishers have disliked as many of my books as they've liked, and more than once they've been convinced that a book was so out of step with the market, it would seriously slow the advance of my career if not send it plunging in reverse down the mountainside. I was told that *Lightning* would flop because: 1) you can't tell a *suspense* story over a thirty-five-year time span, you need a ticking clock; 2) you can't spend the first third of a book with

the lead character *as a child* without confusing readers and making them think that they're reading a young-adult novel; 3) you can't appeal to the broad market with a novel that demands such intense thought just to keep the plot -- let alone the thematic lines -- straight; 4) you can't have a male lead with such a monstrously dark past and still have love develop between him and the female lead because we'll like her less if she likes him after the awful things he's done . . . and more. But to their credit, after a heavy fight, they relented and published the book, and it has gone on to become the title about which we receive the most fan mail and the best-selling title on my paperback backlist. Mostly, I haven't been encouraged to write about vampires and the like but to stop jumping so far afield from book to book. After *Whispers*, which was straight psychological suspense, I turned out a monster story with an almost infinite number of creatures in *Phantoms*, then did an epic-quest in modern dress with science fiction overtones in *Strangers*, then a bizarrely updated version of *Lassie* in *Watchers* . . . but by the time I got to *Cold Fire*, they seemed to have learned to expect the unusual, and they didn't even worry that the hero and the villain were the same character, which was a rule-breaker for sure.

CD: Like *Cold Fire*, *Hideaway* has a definitely cinematic, visual aspect and a complex narrative which nevertheless lends itself well to film adaptation --

KOONTZ: Boy, I wish you were a studio president! You should have heard the confusion in Hollywood when we marketed film rights to *Cold Fire*! Producers would blink at us with bovine stupidity and say, "Jim Ironheart's terrorizing himself . . . he's his own enemy . . . I don't get this." The concept eluded them -- as if in real life most of us aren't our own worst enemies! Of course we

are! But they all wanted to see *real* aliens in the pond, real bug-eyed monsters with real saliva pouring off their fangs.

CD: But you do think your stories, especially recent ones, are cinematic?

KOONTZ: In the sense that they're told in a consciously visual style, yes. I've always been in love with the potential for poetry in language, the image that creates a more detailed picture in your mind, involves all the senses, and stirs emotions. But sometimes my books are too complicated to adapt easily to film. If you've written a book about a haunted house and the terrible things that can happen to people in it, or about a haunted car or haunted doll or haunted Nintendo player, Hollywood can translate that to film with a reasonable rate of success. But as soon as your haunted house story has a complicated subtext, a densely woven thematic web, the likelihood of a successful film declines drastically, because then plot and theme are inextricably entwined, and film is such a surface medium that it can rarely portray the writer's deeper intentions. If you *had* no deeper intentions, the plot will translate well; but if lots of stuff is going on under the surface of the novel, and none of it gets translated to the screen, the plot alone will not sustain the film because it was not what sustained the novel, either. Right now, the only film project I'm really hopeful about is *Hideaway*, which was sold to TriStar. For the first time, I seem to be in the hands of people who fully understand the material and want to bring not just the plot but the deeper intentions to the screen. We'll see. I'm a cynic about Hollywood . . . but still a hopeful cynic.

CD: You've had a lot of bad luck with films. In your opinion, which is the best of the lot? The worst?

KOONTZ: The two best to date are *The Face of Fear*, which I wrote and

executive produced and was therefore able to keep closer to the book in spite of a low TV-movie budget, and *Demon Seed*. The worst were all of the others -- though perhaps the first *Watchers* (to be differentiated from the immortal, pulsing, throbbing, amazing, and thoroughly unnecessary *Watchers II*) is the worst of all because it had the most potential of any of my books to be a really good movie. But I knew we were on a sleigh ride to Hell with that one as soon as I heard they had changed the male lead from a burnt-out, 35-year-old Delta Force officer to a 16-year-old boy. Sometimes I'm amazed they didn't change Don Corleone, in *The Godfather*, from an Italian-American mobster to a Swedish-American proctologist before rolling the cameras.

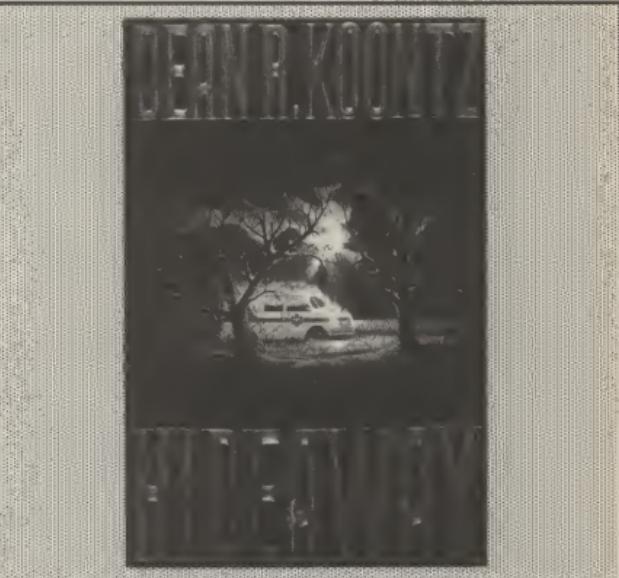
CD: You've written other screenplays besides *The Face of Fear*?

KOONTZ: I did *Midnight* for Mace Neufeld and Bob Rheme over at Paramount. The studio liked the script and in May, 1990, they gave the go-ahead to get a director, expressing a desire to start filming by October 1, for release in theaters in the late spring of 1991. Although Bob and Mace had a number of good people to choose from, they selected Stuart Gordon, who directed *The Reanimator* and *Robot Jox*. This dismayed me, but I was determined to be a team player -- and for a while I thought maybe Mace and Bob had reason to sense untapped genius in their man. The development process with them had been smooth, so I was prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt on this one, even if reluctantly. But after one long telephone conversation with Mr. Gordon and one meeting with him, I was deeply distressed. I felt his understanding of *Midnight* was about at a third-grade level; all that interested him was blood and eroticism, and he wanted the most illogical story changes, for reasons I found incoherent. Also I found many of the suggested new scenes to be too

reminiscent of work by George Romero and DePalma and other directors, and I didn't want to see the original aspects of the story thrown out in favor of familiar material. I withdrew from the project, Mr. Gordon brought in another writer, the film never started in October of 1991, nor in October of '92, either, and people at the studio have told me it will now probably never be filmed

CD: What about *The Bad Place* at Warner Brothers?

KOONTZ: We sold it to Lee Rich and Warners with the understanding that it was *not* a horror novel and that it must be developed as a larger adventure film with science fictional elements, scary but not bloody. They were sold on that approach, and af-



at Paramount. I hope to God it isn't, at least not in the way Mr. Gordon wished to film it, and someday I hope to get back the rights to it. Before I withdrew, I offered to return all the money I had received, with interest, but Bob and Mace would have none of that. I don't think of them as bad guys, and in fact I still think both of them are fairly perceptive and savvy, which makes the whole experience even more frustrating; because even when the studio likes the script and you have producers who seem on the right track, one wrong element can still bring the whole project crashing down. I marvel that any good films ever get made.

ter I had revised the first draft of the script, everyone at Lee Rich's company seemed to like it a lot, as did some people at Warners. But Warners is simultaneously an excitingly creative place and a damn strange place. When you get studio notes on a screenplay, before doing revisions, they don't come from just two or three or four people but from, like, sixteen! They have spread responsibility so thin, over so many people, that revising a screenplay there is not like asking a committee to design a horse but like asking the *congress* to design it. After a brief euphoria over the revised draft, they seemed to panic because the film

was not a horror movie -- when from the beginning we had all known it was never intended to be a horror movie. New notes appeared suggesting that Frank be made the lead character instead of Bobby and Julie Dakota and that perhaps the teleportation angle could be dropped. I offered to buy the project back. They refused. I was out, a new writer was in. They're still making noises about filming it, but I'm hoping my luck will hold and that it will spiral down into development hell.

CD: Isn't there any Koontz film we can look forward to?

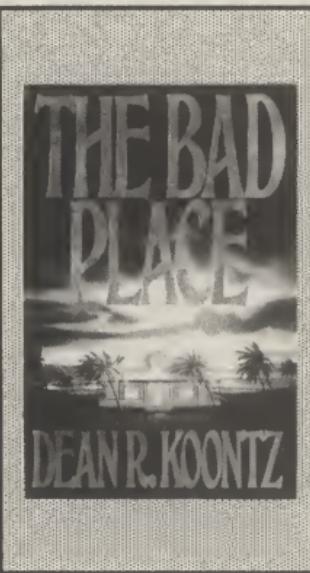
KOONTZ: I'm pretty up about TriStar's attitude and approach toward *Hideaway*, which they're developing with Summers-Quaid Productions. Everyone there seems very smart, and they actually understand the book not merely on a surface level but on a subtextual level as well, which is maybe a first in my experience with Hollywood. I think they might make a highly commercial yet complex film -- and at the very least, they've been remarkably courteous, in a business where courtesy is rarer than diamonds.

CD: I hear that *Oddkins*, your all-ages book, is on Tim Burton's schedule at Warners.

KOONTZ: It's been on his schedule for about a year and a half, while he's been working on *Batman Returns*, but whether he makes it next -- or ever -- is undecided. To tell you the truth, I hate to even think about it, for fear of jinxing it. Burton would bring the *perfect* attitude and fresh vision to *Oddkins* -- which means it's too good to be true. If I pin too much hope on Burton doing it, I'll suddenly hear that he's off the picture and that it's now in the hands of a Burmese car mechanic who doesn't speak English, has never directed a picture before, but recently married the daughter of a studio executive.

CD: *Oddkins* is a favorite in our house. Would you consider doing another children's book?

KOONTZ: I don't rule it out. I never select a book to write, really. It pretty much selects me. I'm compelled to tell a story, whether it was the one I expected to write next or not, and whether it seems like a wise career move or not. The time put into *Oddkins* was not justified by the



financial return; I'd have earned a hundred times more if I'd done another adult novel, but I couldn't get the story out of my head, and it was a lot of fun. If I'm seized by a similar compulsion, I'll no doubt write for children again -- to the dismay of my agent! But right now, the stories I'm obsessing on are all for adults.

CD: That book was illustrated by Phil Parks, who has also done the art for the limited edition of *Twilight Eyes*, the hardcover editions of your Leigh Nichols novels from Dark Harvest, as well as your two recent limited editions from Putnam. How

did you meet Phil, and what is it about his work that has drawn you to use his illustrations over and over again?

KOONTZ: I met him through Chris Zavisa, who published the limited of *Twilight Eyes* and suggested that Phil illustrate it. I was very taken with Phil's work, and he gets better all the time. There were some wonderful color pieces in *Twilight Eyes*, like the three-page foldout of the goblin, and a wealth of terrific black-and-white drawings. *Oddkins* is, in my humble estimation, the most beautifully and imaginatively illustrated book for kids in decades, and some of Phil's interiors for the limited of *Cold Fire* and *Hideaway* are not only splendid illustration but qualify as fine art.

CD: There have been a number of limited editions of your books. Which do you like the most? The least?

KOONTZ: The worst has to be the drab Putnam's limited of *The Bad Place*. The three best, to date, would be the Putnam's limited of *Cold Fire* and *Hideaway*, and *The Land of Enchantment* limited of *Twilight Eyes*.

CD: What's the latest on the forthcoming edition of *Beastchild* from Charnel House?

KOONTZ: Joe and Tracy, at Charnel, do beautiful editions. Some would even say they go completely berserk on the lettered edition. I would never say that, of course. I have too much respect for Joe and Tracy. Besides, they're rock-n-rollers; my God, who knows what they might do if I implied they sometimes go *too far*? They might come out here and bash me to bits with guitars. They seem so mild-mannered, but I'm sure that's a front. Anyway, though it's in the early stages of production, I think it's already becoming clear that *Beastchild*, both the lettered and the numbered, will be real cool. The book is one of my

early science fiction titles, and it's always been one of my favorites. Someday I'll put it together with two other books from that period and do them as an omnibus in paperback, but that's years away. Meanwhile, it'll be nice to see *Beastchild* in a hardcover form.

CD: Harlan Ellison generated a lot of comment awhile back with his *F & SF* column which stated that horror was dead. He supported this contention by citing the shift in the publishing industry to novels with cross-genre appeal, along the lines of Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*. A number of your novels fall into this category. Would you agree or disagree with Harlan?

KOONTZ: I would never disagree with Harlan. He's a friend. Besides, I love life too much. Unlike Joe and Tracy at Charnel House, Harlan doesn't for a moment seem mild-mannered! On the other hand, I would never agree with Harlan, either, certainly not in public. I wouldn't want to give him the satisfaction. Harlan should never be flattered by being told he's right about anything. It's just too dangerous. Hoooo, boy! Harlan is already sure he knows best how to run the world, and I'm certain that at night he sits in his den and broods about the advisability of orchestrating a coup against one government or another. Do we dare encourage him?

CD: I hate to interrupt your ragging of Harlan, but I think you're avoiding answering the question. Is horror dead?

KOONTZ: I don't know. I'm not even sure I care. As I've been telling people for years, I don't write horror. That's why the mainstream reviewers usually understand exactly what I'm doing, but reviewers in the horror genre, with rare exception, most often miss the point. They want something from my books that I never intended to give them, and when they

don't get it, they get confused or incensed. What I'm writing are cross-genre crime novels with a bizarre or fantastic twist and (since *Watchers*) with a heavy injection of humor.

CD: In his Westercon Guest of Honor speech some time back, recently reprinted in *Midnight Graffiti*, Harlan Ellison --

KOONTZ: That name again!

CD: -- outlined some of the horrible experiences he and other writers had in dealing with the darker elements of fandom. What has been your experience with fans, good and bad? Is there a single best and worst example?

KOONTZ: Actually, Harlan once asked me if I had any horror stories -- "I don't write horror!" I screamed at him -- about fans, and I'm not sure he believed me when I said I had none. But in fact every fan -- and at the last several book signings, before I stopped doing them, a couple of thousand people showed up each time -- every fan I've ever encountered has been nice. Curiously, however, I could write volumes about the unkind, treacherous, and sad things that fellow writers have done to me. For example, one very well-known writer, evidently envious of my success even though he has gobs of it himself, went out of his way to send a bad review of one of my books to an English publisher -- a mutual acquaintance -- when that publisher, in passing, praised the book to him. It was one of only two or three bad reviews the book had received, and this guy wanted to be sure the English publisher knew that not *everyone* thought it was a great book. The publisher was so startled by this breach of gentlemanly behavior among colleagues that he sent me the writer's correspondence with a warning: "Beware of this fellow. He evidently feels writers are competing with each other -- literature as war." I don't understand that attitude, but

I've seen so much of it, and been on the receiving end of so much, that it's the biggest reason I go to so few conventions: too many dangerously inflated egos jammed into too small a space.

CD: Although the bulk of your published work consists of novels, you have also worked extensively with the short story. It's been rumored that Putnam will be releasing a short story collection soon. Is that correct?

KOONTZ: I'll be putting a collection together later this year for publication probably in 1994. It'll be pretty large, probably with some new work in it as well as reprints. I've got an unusual concept for it, so I'm not talking about it much yet, because I've found that talking too much about a creative project before you actually do it can spoil the fun of doing it.

CD: Where do you see your work heading as the decade winds down to the Millennium?

KOONTZ: For a long time my publisher was worried because I kept giving them different kinds of books instead of sticking to a narrow format. Lately, they've gotten used to the idea that the books are going to be all over the lot and are going to break some rules; they're comfortable with that. Which means it's time to go farther out on a limb, make my agent and publisher nervous again, and see what happens. Exactly what that limb will be like, I'm not yet sure. Though the novel I'm going to start when I finish *Dragon Tears* (the current book in the word processor) will have no element of the fantastic in it at all. So maybe that's where I'm headed. Or maybe not. I find out book by book. There's no neat little career plan in the files.

LESS THAN HUMAN

by

Gary Raisor

"Gary's vampires...failed to read the book on how vampires are to behave. They may be less than human, but their actions are very human".

"And they're disturbing and scary because they're funny".

"Gary is one of the few writers I've ever read that realizes humor and horror are truly opposite sides of a double edged knife".

-- From Joe R. Lansdale's introduction for "Less Than Human"

Meet Steven Adler and Earl Jacobs. Two pool hustlers, who like to travel, meet people, and drain the life out of them. Steven's pool cue, made of human bone (a previous player's legs), is more than it seems, and a feathered serpent graces its handle.

John Warrick, a small time hustler and drifter, has stolen the pool cue. Warrick possess's a psychic ability that haunts him, and the cue stick offers up its own past in John's dreams.

But it's more than dreams, as Warrick soon realizes as he's drawn into the world of vampirism that threatens his very existence. The climax draws together an incredible cast of characters to defeat an old but unique evil. And thus starts the thrilling ride of supernatural suspense that Gary Raisor brings to you in "Less Than Human".

The Overlook Connection Press is proud to announce a special limited and trade edition of "Less Than Human" to be published in May-June of 1992. Featuring a special introduction by Joe R. Lansdale, and unique cover wraparound art by Guy Aitchison.

LIMITED EDITION - The limited edition of only 300 copies will be bound in a white vinyl cloth, with red metallic printing on the spine and cover. Specially illustrated endpapers. The book will printed in red lettering on a gray Teton Simpson text. The slipcase will be an oak coffin, in a natural finish, with brass hinges and latch. The coffin will be lined in red crushed velvet, which will border the book and hold it securely. Since there will be no dustjacket for the limited, this edition will feature a color frontispiece of the trade edition dust jacket art so you can experience the unique cover art by Guy Aitchison. Signed by author Gary Raisor, Joe R. Lansdale, and Guy Aitchison. **150.00 + 5.00 handling..**

TRADE EDITION - 1,000 copies are being published. A wraparound color dustjacket of original artwork by Guy Aitchison will be featured. Bound in unique colored materials of cloth and paper, and featuring illustrated endpapers. Specially printed with black lettering on a gray Teton Simpson paper. **25.00 + 2.00 handling.**

CHAPBOOK EDITION - A special chapbook "LESS THAN HUMAN: CHAPTER TEN" has been published with a special introduction by Gary Raisor, and original art by Guy Aitchison. This special preview edition, printed and published in the shape of a coffin is limited and signed by the author at the 2nd World Horror Convention where it debuted March 1992, Nashville, Tennessee. **5.00 + 1.00 handling.**

You can order LESS THAN HUMAN from THE OVERLOOK CONNECTION PRESS, P.O. BOX 526, WOODSTOCK, GA 30188. Phone or fax us at the office - 404-926-1762 or the warehouse - 704-837-8089 24 hours a day with inquiries. Make check or money order to The Overlook Connection Press. A confirmation card will be sent upon receipt of your order. Due in May-June 1992. **ORDER TODAY! DON'T MISS THIS SPECIAL EDITION!!**

NAME _____ PHONE () -

ADDRESS _____

check here if you would like an Overlook Connection Bookstore catalog. **FREE WITH ORDER!** Or send \$2.00 for a sample catalog without order. Dealer inquiries welcomed!

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

A novel excerpt from LESS THAN HUMAN

GARY RAISOR

I don't know about you, folks, but I hate reading excerpts from upcoming novels. They're a big tease; they're foreplay without sex. They do their best to get you all hot and bothered, and then, at the moment of truth, you're given a smile and a wink as the object of your desire presents you with a bill for the evening's festivities.

That's right, a bill.

You find out it was all just a big come on.

Yes, gentle reader, this is where you find out you have to cough up some more dough if you want to experience the rest of the promised silken delights. Otherwise you're left holding your wallet in one hand and Mr. Funtime in the other, if you get my drift.

It's not fair.

So with that out of the way, why am I doing this?

Because I very much want you to read my book, Less Than Human, and I don't know any other way to get your attention. Well, actually I do, but David Hinchberger and Gary Goldstein, the two guys responsible for publishing this book, won't let me come to your house . . . and they also took away all my power tools, including the drill. So all I have left to convince you is this brief intro.

What you are about to read is Chapter One of Less Than Human, and I'm going to tell you right up front, this is a vampire novel, but it's not your typical vampire novel. I want to be very up front about that. If you're looking for the same-old same-old, this baby is definitely not for you. No swirling capes, no foggy castles, and no bad Christopher Lee impersonations. My bloodsuckers trace their roots back to the ancient Aztecs and the days of blood sacrifice, so my guys don't give a shit about traditional vampire behavior. That's right, we're doing a new take here. Something different.

Are you up for it? If not, you'd better turn back now.

You're about to meet Steven Adler and Earl Jacobs, pool hustlers extraordinaire, and killers without peer. I promise you've never met two vampires like these. They roam the small towns of the modern-day American southwest, shooting pool in smoky old barrooms, drinking blood, and raising hell. They're funny and they're mean. Chalk up your cue sticks, partners, I think you're going to like them.

(Okay, David and Gary, I'm all through with the intro. Can I have my power tools back now? The drill, too?)

CHAPTER ONE

The Greyhound pulled into Carruthers, Texas, a little after nine and unloaded seventeen people into the unseasonably cold autumn night. All had family waiting for them.

All, except for two.

Steven Adler was the last one to get off. He was slender and pale, about twenty-five with sleek blond hair combed straight back beneath a black headband. A small golden crucifix dangled from his right ear, catching the light whenever he moved. He wore black leather hightops, jeans, and a black sweatshirt that had a picture of an upright shark leaning on a pool cue. If the cold bothered him, he didn't show it. He took in a deep breath, as though inhaling the night, and impatiently shifted the case he carried under his arm.

"You got the address?" Steven asked the older man who had gotten off the bus with him.

Earl Jacobs buttoned his ratty leather jacket against the cold. He too carried a case. "Yeah, I think it's only a couple of blocks from here, over on Eighth." He didn't look happy.

"Good night for a stroll," Steven said with a slight grin. "You can't tell anything about a town from a cab, Earl. You've got to get out and walk around if you want to know what's going on."

"The only thing I see going on around here is the possibility of getting your throat cut," Earl answered.

"You always were an optimist, Earl. That's what I like most about you."

They walked across the now deserted lot, quickly leaving the lights of the bus station behind. Several of the buses were parked over by the far fence, giant shadowy mastodons sleeping in the night. The sounds of their cooling engines carried into the night as though their sleep was troubled.

After five blocks, Earl stopped to lean against a street lamp and fished the address out of his pocket once more. "We should've been there by now." His breathing

was ragged. Beneath the gray stubble, his face had taken on a slightly bluish cast, and when the wind chased some leaves down the sidewalk, he began shivering.

Steven took the piece of paper from his companion's hands. "I'm sorry, Matt. We should've taken a cab."

"It's Earl. My name is Earl. That's the second time you've called me Matt this week. Who is this Matt?"

"Matt Thomas, an old friend from a long long time ago. I'm sorry, Earl, sometimes I forget. Are you all right?"

"I'll be okay. It's a little hard to breathe after that bastard got me last night. I think he busted one of my ribs." Earl pulled out a pint and tossed off a quick sip. "I always thought the game of pool was supposed to be a non-contact sport."

"You made him look bad in front of his girlfriend." Steven took the proffered bottle, took a sip and made a face. "She was laughing at him."

"I coulda showed *her* a few strokes, too," Earl said, tucking the bottle out of sight.

"She was young enough to be your daughter."

"Granddaughter is more like it." Earl looked around at the crumbling buildings and weed-infested lots. The smoke stacks from some long closed factory cast a shadow across the sidewalk. "I think we're going the wrong way."

"No, we're not. It's up ahead about five blocks."

"How the hell do you know that?"

"Somebody's playing nine ball. I heard them break."

"Did they sink any?" Earl asked with barely masked sarcasm.

"Yeah, one."

"You wouldn't happen to know which one, would you?"

"As a matter of fact, I do. It was the nine ball." Steven looked at his watch and stepped up the pace. "Come on. I feel like playing."

Earl had to trot to keep up. Damned new boots were killing his feet. His breath was a sporadic white cloud that trailed along behind him in the night like exhaust from some engine that wasn't hitting on all cylinders. He silently cursed. His damned ribs hurt worse than his feet.

A soft glow of light spilling through a window told them they had at last found Leon's Pool Emporium. A skinny old black man weaved out of the building, paused to drain the last of his beer before smashing the bottle against the door of a Bonnieville sitting at the curb. On the car's windshield someone had spray painted in bright red: *REPENT, before Jesus runs the table on YOU.*

"I guess getting a game in a nice place is out of the question?" Earl asked as he watched the old black man stagger off into the night.

"Your problem, Earl, is you've got no spirit of adventure."

"I'm getting too old for adventure," Earl said under his breath. "What I need is a couple of drinks and about ten hours sleep."

They pushed through the swinging door and halted inside the dim interior. The room was small and it smelled of hard times; the booze and cigar smoke couldn't blot it out. There were four gigantic Steepleton pool tables taking up the middle of the room. Only one was being used by a haggard cowboy and a college kid playing nine ball. A mahogany bar ran along the back and three men were sitting in front of it nursing drinks and arguing. They were watching football on a TV with the sound turned off. One of them eased off his stool and fed some change to the juke.

D. J. Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince added to the din.

"Why don't you turn off that nigger music and turn up the TV?" Earl yelled, walking closer. "I got money on that game."

"Cause it's broke, that's why," the bartender said, as though the answer was obvious. "It's been broke since '79. We got to where we kinda like it that way."

Every face at the bar turned toward Earl.

Every face at the bar was black.

Earl halted.

The huge bartender kept on polishing glasses and studying them as though they were apparitions that would disappear if he just waited long enough. He showed them some yellow teeth. Someone had cut him bad years ago, leaving a scar that ran from his eyebrow down to his jawbone, and when he smiled, only half his face worked. The smile didn't improve his looks any. "You gentlemen must be lost."

"Not if you shoot pool here," Steven said. He took a stool at the bar and laid his case on the pitted wood. "You do shoot pool here, don't you?"

"Yeah, we been known to shoot a game or two. If the money's right." The bartender quit polishing glasses and leaned forward, his muddy eyes looking at Steven Adler the way a snake looks at a crippled bird. "You two sorry ass whiteboys don't look like you got a pot to piss in."

"We got a little put back," Earl volunteered. "Mom doesn't know about it, but we've been saving our lunch money. You'd be surprised how it adds up after awhile." He pulled a wad of bills out of his jacket pocket and laid it beside the case on the bar. "There's a lot of dead presidents there. I'm sure you recognize a few of them."

The bartender's eyes took in the money and then shifted back to them. The teeth appeared once again. It was not a reassuring sight. "You two got a lot of balls walking in here with a roll like that. What's to keep us from cutting you into fishbait and dumping you in the river? Shit, I bet they won't find you till spring -- when you float."

"Jesus, what the hell's happened to western hospitality?" Earl opened his jacket, let his fingers play over his

busted ribs and the .38 he had tucked in the waistband of his pants. "We don't want no trouble. Word has it you got a shooter here by the name of D. A. Fontaine. We heard he handles a stick pretty good. My boy here is willing to pay to see how good."

"You boys ain't exactly hiding the fact you're hustlers, walking in here and flashing all that money." Leon studied them, trying to place their faces. "Should I have heard of either of you?"

"No, we're kind of shy. If you don't get your player out here quick," Steven said, "these two sorry ass white boys are taking their money and leaving."

The bartender picked up the phone, dialed it with a pencil. His fingers were too large to manage the buttons. "It's Leon, get yourself on over here, right now. You got some business."

Earl was tossing down his third shot of George Dickel when the door swung open, letting in the cold autumn air. As he started to turn, he caught sight of Steven's face in the mirror behind the bar. It had a look of bemused amazement on it. He looked around and saw why.

D. A. Fontaine was a girl. A black teenaged girl. She was wearing black leather pants that fit her like a second skin and a chocolate colored leather jacket that was too big for her. Under her arm was a case much like the one Steven and Earl carried. When she pulled her hands out of her jacket pockets, long golden lacquered nails flashed in the light.

"Is this some kind of joke?" Earl took in the slight form standing in the doorway. "Ain't it past your bedtime, little sister?"

"I guess I could ask you the same, gramps. Shouldn't you be getting back to the home?" She smiled sweetly. "Before you miss out on the stewed prunes. I hear old people get real cranky if they don't get their stewed --"

"You can't be more than fourteen." Earl's voice rose with anger. "We came all the way from Corpus Christi to play a fourteen-year-old girl. I can't goddamn believe this, a girl."

"I've got a name," she said, unruffled. "It's Dorinda but everyone calls me D. A., and I'm not fourteen. I turned seventeen in July, thank you."

"How come we never heard you were a girl," Earl asked. His voice lowered but his expression was still suspicious.

"On account of I used to dress up like a boy when I played pool. The guys wouldn't have liked losing to a girl. But, as you can see," she said, peeling off her jacket, "it got harder and harder to look like a boy. Besides, I found it's a lot more fun to be a girl." She flashed a smile at Steven.

"You stop that, Dorinda," Leon said from behind the bar. "Ain't been able to do nothing with that girl since her mother ran off."

"She's your daughter?" Earl inquired, disbelief on his face.

"She kept her mother's name. What are you trying to say?" Leon cracked his knuckles and a scowl appeared. "Nothing. I can see the resemblance much better now."

"I hate to interrupt this tale of marital woe, but are you backing her action?" Steven asked Leon.

Leon nodded.

Earl got up from his stool, looked over at the bartender. "Say, brother, you wouldn't mind letting me get a look at some of *your* dead presidents, would you?"

Leon reached into a pocket and came out with a wad of bills, which he laid beside Earl's stack.

"Looks like mine's bigger than yours," Earl noted with a wink. "Ain't many white men can make that statement."

The expression on Leon's face didn't change.

Steven opened up his case and lifted out his cue. It was a yellowish white, and wrapped around the handle was an intricate red snake covered with feathers. The stick was a rare work of art. "What's your favorite game, Dorinda? You like eight ball?" He put the cue together quickly. "Or maybe a little nine ball is more your speed?"

"I like eight ball. I always got the stripes when Daddy and I played."

"Eight ball it is. Rack 'em will you, Earl?"

"You want to flip a coin, or roll the cue ball to see who breaks?" Dorinda asked.

"No, that's all right. You break."

Dorinda shrugged. "Okay, man, it's your money. I play for a hundred a game. That too rich for your blood?"

Steven smiled, shook his head no. For a moment Dorinda felt a slight tingle of fear when she looked into his green eyes. Something wasn't right about them. They seemed way too old for his face. And there was some kind of hidden rage swirling around in their depths. She looked away, and when she looked back, his eyes were okay. It must have been the light, she decided.

"Something wrong?" Steven asked.

"No, everything's fine," she said, angry for letting this guy get to her. She took a deep breath and forced herself to be calm. "Say, Earl, you gonna rack those balls tonight or you just gonna stand there and play pocket pool?"

Earl finally got the balls the way he wanted them, a good tight rack. He looked over at Leon. "Listen to the mouth on that girl. You let her talk to the customers like that?"

"Ain't been able to do nothing with that girl since --"

"I know, I know. Since her mother ran off," Earl finished. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

Leon smiled. The effort looked like it hurt him.

As soon as Earl lifted the rack, Dorinda put all of her ninety-seven pounds behind her stick, driving the cue

ball into the closely bunched balls. They split with a flat crack, scattering across the table. They rolled around for a while. Slowed.

One teetered on the edge of a pocket. Fell.

"Looks like this is your lucky night, you get stripes," Steven said. "Just like when you played Daddy." Steven's voice was soft, teasing. "I bet your daddy used to let you win, didn't he?" He sat down on a stool and crossed his legs at the ankles, became motionless.

Dorinda walked around the table. "He hasn't let me win since I was nine." She looked at Steven, anger in her eyes. "That's a real nice stick you got there. Too bad you're not going to get a chance to use it."

"Yes, it is a nice stick," he said. "I've had it for a long time." He caressed it softly.

She sank a shot.

"Do you know what it's made out of?" he asked.

"Looks like ivory to me."

"No, not ivory. Bone."

Dorinda tried to ignore him, to concentrate on the game. She sank her next three shots, but she was edgy, aware of his unwinking stare. She missed.

"My turn, already?" He uncoiled from his stool and studied the table for a moment. Then, with practiced ease, he sank the seven ball in the far right corner pocket, putting enough spin on the cue ball to draw it back to him. He sank the three. The two quickly followed. Within thirty seconds he had dropped every solid colored ball on the table into a pocket. Only her stripes remained.

And the eight.

Steven rolled the yellowish white cue between his hands. "I thought you'd be better." He seemed disappointed and slightly angry.

She stared at him, alternately attracted and repulsed. "Is that stick really made out of...bone. Or were you just kidding around, trying to throw me off my game?"

"I never kid about anything to do with pool. It's made out of bone. Human bone."

"You're lying. Where did you get something like that?"

"I got it from the first guy I ever played against. When I made my comeback."

Everyone at the bar was watching them now. The TV continued on, soundless people cheering a soundless game. The juke dropped another record. Leon dropped a glass.

Conversation looked to be on hold.

Dorinda looked over at her father, and for the first time she could ever remember, he looked afraid. The sight filled her with fear too.

"He lost it to you on a bet, huh?" Dorinda asked, licking her dry lips and trying to smile.

"Yes he did, in a manner of speaking."

"I bet it's worth a lot."

"Only to him. It was made from his legs."

The smile died on her lips, unborn.

Leon reached his hand under the bar. "All right, that's enough. You're scaring Dorinda talking that voodoo bullshit. All bets are off." His right hand came out from under the bar with a double barreled sawed-off twelve gauge in it. "You and your friend get the hell out of here, right now."

Steven looked at the shotgun, then calmly turned back to Dorinda as though Leon didn't exist. His eyes caught the light and gave it back, shiny yellow, like some kind of animal. "You want to see a trick?" Without waiting for an answer he closed his eyes and stroked the cue ball. It banked twice then rolled the entire length of the table with maddening slowness until it kissed the eight, soft as a whisper. It fell into the pocket.

Leon spat, wadded up a hundred dollar bill and threw it at Steven's feet. "Pick it up, go on, you hear me? You take your money and hit that door. I don't want no trouble."

"We don't want any trouble either, do we Earl?" Steven said. With a small grin, he unscrewed his cue stick and laid it on the table. He picked up the wadded bill, walked toward the bar. Stopped as the gun raised. "We just came in here for a friendly game of pool."

"We like to keep it friendly," Earl agreed. He stood up.

Two soft clicks were the only sounds as Leon pulled back the hammers on the twelve-gauge. It looked like a toy in his huge hand. "I don't know what you two came in here for, but it damn sure wasn't to shoot no pool." He swung the gun around, centered the two stubby barrels on Earl's chest. "If I had to guess, I'd say your friend there is some crazy son-of-a-bitch who gets his kicks out of scaring young girls."

"Hell, Leon," Earl said, "you must be psychic. You ought to get you one of them 900 telephone numbers and tell fortunes for a living. You see anything in my future?"

"Nothing you're gonna like if I ever lay eyes on either one of you again," Leon promised.

"Damn, I was hoping for money."

Steven laid the crumpled bill on the bar, started backing away. "Oh, we'll meet again," he said. "You can count on it." He turned to pick up his cue stick, the easy smile still on his face. "Come on, Earl, I guess we'd better leave. It looks like we've worn out our welcome." The smile left his face.

His cue stick was gone.

BEWARE!

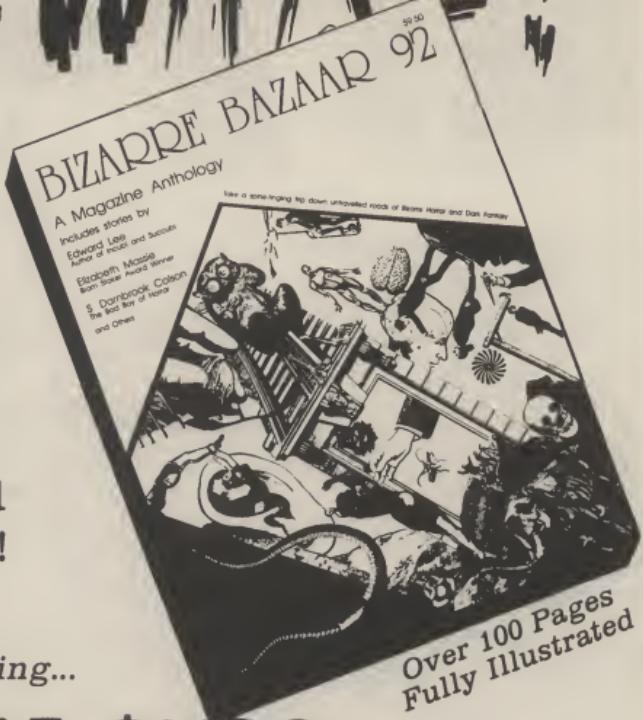
There are
things
inside
Bizarre
Bazaar 92
that will
scare the
living hell
out of you!

And while
you're screaming...

WIN \$500 ORDER NOW
Details Inside

28 Tales of Terror by

Phineas Altenzauber	Lisa S. Laurencot
John Ames	Edward Lee
S. Darnbrook Colson	D.F. Lewis
Robert Devereaux	S.C. Lofton
James S. Dorr	Elizabeth Massie
Tic Douloureux	Mark McLaughlin
L.B. Feero	Greg Norris
Mark Fewell	Greg Nyman
Barb Hendee	Mark Rainey
Chad Hensley	Octavio Ramos, Jr.
Scott Julian	Eric Shearer
Zachary Kane	Lucy Taylor



ORDER NOW CD

\$9.50 plus \$1.50 Shipping

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

AVAILABLE JUNE 1992

TAL Publications
P.O. Box 1837, Leesburg, Virginia 22075



THOMAS F. MONTELEONE

THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS ITALIAN ASSOCIATION

PART THE SECOND OF:

A MODEST PROPOSAL IN WHICH WE WHUP-ASS ON THE SUITS

For those of you who didn't read last month's column, some of what follows is not going to make a lot of sense, but I don't have the time or space to repeat or even summarize the important points covered. I don't normally do two-part columns, but this topic was a special situation, and we've got to forge ahead with new material that builds on points scored in Part I. Knowing this, you have four options:

1.) send me \$3.00 to cover the postage, time, and printing to send you a copy of Part I, or . . .

2.) send Editor Chizmar \$4.00 for the whole back-issue of Fall 1991, or . . .

3.) just read on and try to dope out what's going down, or . . .

4.) turn to the next piece and forget about this one.

Hanging around? Okay, let's get started.

As you may have recalled, we ended last ish's column with a question: *What can the Rest Of us do about this new power that's been handed to us??*

The answer is quite simple -- but the execution may be something

else again. But here it is: We get together an organization or a coalition or a combine -- whatever you want to call it -- of writers who have audiences ranging from 10,000 to 500,000+ readers. The latter number is the important one, though -- we have to include at least a couple sales cruiserweights (writers who sell at least 250,000 per book) in our club. How big a group are we talking about? Hard to tell, but it could number ten, twenty, thirty, or even more. Naturally, the more the better. Now, why are we getting these writers together? To form yet another weary Something-Writers-of America, Inc.?

Jesus, no!

To form a Publishing House, of course! It's so obvious, it's silly. Cut the Suits out of the loop. The writers have the product, the writers have the audience, and they have the technology. Go for it.

Let's call this bunch of individuals WRATS (a purposely bad acronym for Writers Roused Against The Suits) and let's also realize something important: if our group is comprised of twenty writers who make their living by selling books and at least two of them are selling 250,000 or more per title), then we have a combined sales impact of more than *one million* copies (and we're

assuming these numbers are *after "returns"*)

What does that magic million really mean?

If you sold your book to the Suits, it means: 6 million dollars (figuring the average paperback at \$5.99) chopped at the knees by the distributors to yield \$3 million in sales income. Believe me, this is a **VERY** good looking number to most paperback publishers. It is a number they would call "healthy."

Now, going by the formula we outlined in Part I last ish, we can see that if you received **BEST Royalty Rate You Could Ever Hope to See of 15%**, you would get \$450,000 (which after taxes and your agent's fees would probably be more like \$200,000 . . . sad, I know, but true).

If you were a member of WRATS, it means: 6 million dollars chopped down to \$2.1 million (because of the generous 65% discount WRATS offers the distributors). It also means subtracting the cost of the book's production (let's be generous and figure \$1.00/book) which leaves us with *1.5 million* dollars which is the number that goes back to **YOU**. So now you can take your agent's fee (hey, I know this is heresy, but maybe we don't even need agents any longer!) and you can throw The Internal Revenue Scammers their protec-

tion money and you *still* end up with \$750,000 dollars.

Even if my numbers are very fucked up and you only make *twice* as much instead of three times, so who gives a shit?

The point is, folks: THERE IS A BETTER WAY TO DO THE BUSINESS OF WRITING.

There's a better way to make more money and we're NOT DOING IT.

Sure, it's not as easy as it sounds, you say. Producing a book takes time and money. Design, layout, artwork, typesetting, etc. I realize all that -- I've *done* it! Why do you think I'm espousing this whole thesis? Cuz I've been there and I can see how good it could be.

Problems?

Sure, plenty of them. A lot more than I've thought of, I'm sure. But I'll try to cover the one(s) I think are most major.

The biggest, most prime, most important obstacle to overcome is persuading some of the Cruiserweights to join WRATS. You see, we gotta have a couple of guys and dolls who are selling those "healthy" numbers. And this kind of move will take nothing less than stainless steel nuts for writers who are making a "comfortable" living under the present scenario. For the rest of the writers, the ones struggling from book to book, always scrambling and hoping that the next advance will be enough to pay off all the credit card and second mortgage debt so they can start the merry-go-round all over again, the risk is not so great -- they're not making enough money to worry about *losing* it.

And you gotta have the cruiserweights, you gotta have some writers with NAMES that are consistently drawing strong readership loyalty. How big a name do we need? I don't know yet. Rick Hautala? F. Paul Wilson? Dan Simmons? Some things you just don't know till you try. But you gotta have NAMES that the distributors will recognize well enough to know they can sell these

books they get from WRATS House just as they could when they received them from Berkley or Ace or Pocket.

Yeah, that's the big problem. Are they any writers out there who are not only big enough, but ballsy enough, to DO IT?

I don't know, but I need to find out. We all do. However I respect the confidence of my colleagues and if any of you wish to write me to investigate this at:

P.O. Box 5788
Baltimore, MD 21208

or you can call me (if you know the number or know somebody well enough to get it.) I might be reckless and a tad arrogant, but I ain't crazy enough to put my fucking phone number in this column.

I really believe this idea has merit, not only because it's mine, but because it was done before. Not by writers, but by *actors*. (Yeah, I can't believe it either, but it just makes me all the more positive we can do it. I mean, if a bunch of supercilious vain-glorious egomaniac "stars" could be so intelligently mobilized, then we writers certainly should be challenged to do as well.)

I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and a bunch of other Hollywood stars (Harlan, help me out on the details here) decided they could make and distribute their *own* movies.

(Sound familiar?)

They called themselves UNITED ARTISTS, and guess what? -- it worked. They became a studio and eventually became as ponderous and hidebound as everybody else, but for a while they had their moment in the sun, and it was good. And that's what I'd like to see happen here. I'd like to at least be able to say that we saw the opportunity and we took a shot.

Why would we want to do this, you ask?

For the MONEY, of course. Louis Untermeyer said: "Write

out of love; write out of instinct; write out of reason. But *always* write for money."

Samuel Johnson: "Any man who doesn't write for the money is a blockhead."

Yeah, they had the right idea, friends. There's nothing noble in writing for less than you're capable of earning.

The funny-sad thing is this. We have all these writer's groups and they spend half their time arguing about what kind of awards they can throw at each other when we all know the awards don't mean dogshit. The tragedy is that the HWA, Inc. or the MWA, Inc. or the SFFWA, Inc. doesn't realize they could be their own publishers . . .

The success of my own little *Borderlands Press* and all the other quality small presses has proved it to me. I don't need the whole floor of a Manhattan skyscraper and a bloated staff of worker drones to produce books that can compete with the Suits.

It is the year of the WRATS. Let's do something about it.

That's it for now, friends, but I hope it's not the end of this notion. I offer it up to you in the hope that something will come of this. Please talk about it amongst yourselves and with me. Believe it or not, we have the power. Let's see what we can do with it.

Next issue, I'm going to tell you about the real world of marketing and publicity and how we just don't use the machinery to our advantage. Stay tuned.

SHAMELESS HYPE AND PROMOTION:

My novel *The Blood of the Lamb* was delayed a month or so. It is scheduled for a June or July release, and it is a really great novel. Please order it in a limited edition from *Borderlands Press* or from the Suits at Tor or your local bookseller. And watch for *Borderlands 3* in late Summer.

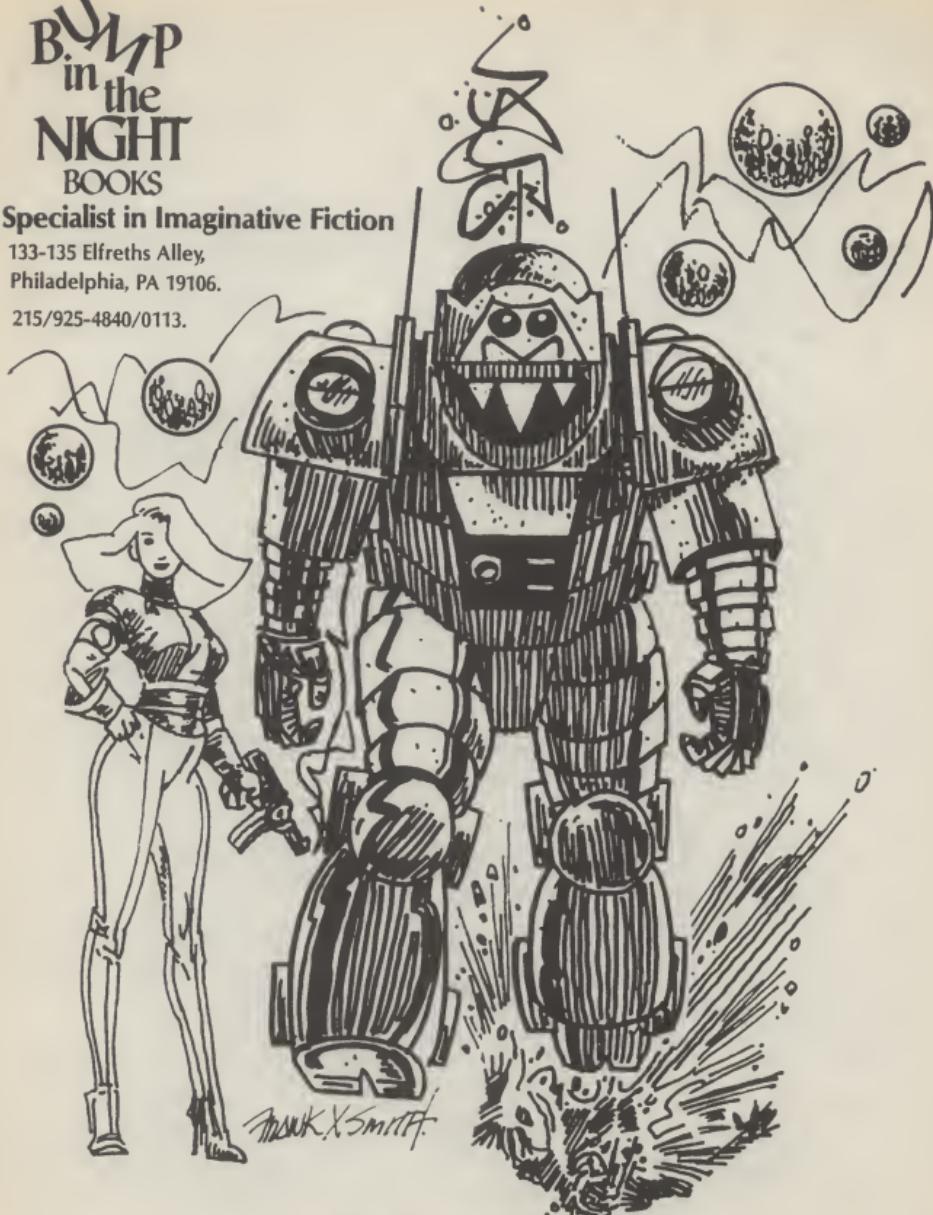
BUMP in the NIGHT BOOKS

Specialist in Imaginative Fiction

133-135 Elfreths Alley,

Philadelphia, PA 19106.

215/925-4840/0113.



**We Buy We Sell
Send for Our Catalogue**



MATTHEW J. COSTELLO

NIGHTMARE ALLEY

God, does anyone else beside me miss *Twin Peaks*?

David Lynch's weekly freak show, his special nightmare alley, had dwarves, giants, weird owls — everything but geeks, my wide-eyed friends. (Geeks, if you remember, chomp off the heads of chickens for the entertainment of sideshow rubes.)

The *Twin Peaks* series corresponded, in my life, to what I now look back at as a definite low point. Our new baby, our third, decided that he was put here to be miserable and wanted the world to know.

I walked the floor with said child, watching Officer Andy, Agent Cooper, and the Log Lady. When the Angelo Baldalamenti music came on it was the one moment when the baby would grow quiet, when he'd stop screaming about his colic. Then I could see him for all his beauty and wonder, as the bass riff of the *Twin Peaks* theme vibrated the floor.

He'd watch the waterfall, the shots of the mythical Northwest town, and the music soothed him.

The year was also memorable as a point of tremendous financial crunch. My wife had to take a leave from her job to tend the baby (who we had imagined would quietly play in his pen while I wrote novels . . .).

The nice folks at a credit card company ran up a hefty phone bill

staying in touch with me. They liked to call at 8 a.m. . . .

(And yes, I am keeping a list.)

Those days are gone. My baby is now a cute, amazingly bright boy. And the wolves have backed well away and may, thanks to Nintendo, be in full retreat.

Why Nintendo?

Perhaps if there's time I will explain how the Japanese video game monolith may forever alter my normal lifestyle of filching from Peter to hand it over to grubby Paul.

But I wanted to talk about a short story first. And I'm doing this largely because I want to write a novel based on that story. But since that might not happen for a half dozen years or so, this will be my way of laying claim to the literary property.

I was asked to write a story for a Dracula anthology due out from DAW this summer. The only rule was that it had to deal with the historical Dracula. Now, I only do short stories when asked. Not because the size of my head requires a wheelbarrow, but because that way I minimize the possibility of rejection.

I write the story. They buy it. I like that.

So for this story, I put Dracula on the *R.M.S. Titanic*. There are references to some fall-out from his

careless followers in England, his craven servitors who had made things awfully hot in Carfax Abbey. (In fact, I may have intimated that Jack D. Ripper was a sheep gone astray from the Vlad Tepes fold.)

So he's on the *Titanic*, off to open his new franchise in America. And he's having a real ball, sucking down the blue blood, retreating to his special vault in the cargo hold to while away the days.

But something goes wrong. The mighty *Titanic* sideswipes an iceberg in exactly the wrong way, guaranteeing that it would sink in two hours.

And did you know that if the watertight doors had been opened, the ship would have sunk in uniform manner, horizontally, and easily stayed afloat until the rescue ship came at dawn?

Sigh. The advantage of hindsight.

So, does Dracula cadge his way onto one of the lifeboats? Uh-uh, no way (cue Bill Murray's voice). You see . . . what if he's on the lifeboat when old mister sun comes up?

You'd have fried Vampire on raft.

He could go down with the ship. Sure, he's immortal. He doesn't have to breathe. But then what? Crawl his way to Newfoundland while

every crab and blue fish chews at his pale flesh. Just how immortal is he?

There was, clearly, only one thing for Dracula to do. He had to go to his watertight vault, get inside his coffin, and go down with the *Royal Mail Steamer Titanic* and wait for Bob Ballard to come nudging around.

(Now, imagine that show on National Geographic. Dah, dah, dah, da -- ah, dah! Or maybe Geraldo opens Dracula's Secret Vault -- a Live TV Special!)

Anyway, that was the story. And with other twists I have cooking in my *widdle* head, I think it could be a fun novel. Something Michael Crichton might have done before he decided to take on the Japanese.

The Japanese . . . that reminds me. There was something I wanted to --

Well, the coda to this tale is that I was in conference with Rick Hautala, horror novelist extraordinaire and blood brother, and we started thinking that this could lead to a whole series of books . . . each one focusing on the unfortunate travel arrangements made by Mr. Dracula.

For example, Dracula is on the *Hindenburg* ready to dock at Lakehurst.

Maybe he collected some dried elephant testes and made the mistake of flying Korean Air Liner 107 -- which the Russians accidentally rudely removed from the sky.

Or Drac gets a chance to be

the first something-or-other in space via the doomed *Challenger*.

Here's your space suit, Mr. Tepes . . .

(Serious note: Charles Pellegrino's book, *Her Name, Titanic*, draws a remarkable parallel between the hubris of the *Titanic*'s creators and the scientists connected with the *Challenger* disaster. It's a book worth looking for . . .)

Other matters . . . I referred in my last column to a piece in the forthcoming *Mystery Scene*. And in that piece, I promised, I would reveal why my next novel or two (or three) won't be horror novels.

But by the time that article arrived at *Mystery Scene*, the magazine had abruptly removed its horror section.

So -- (take a breath here) -- my article on "why I'm not doing horror (for a bit)" didn't appear because the magazine I was writing it for, er, removed its horror section.

Need I say more?

Horror will go on. Just nobody will make any money doing it . . .

No. Scratch that last comment. Thought I was going to forget about Nintendo . . . didn't you? You see, I did the script for *The Seventh Guest*, a CD-ROM product due this November for Virgin Games, and it will change games as we know

them . . .

The script was 100 pages long, involving a dozen actors who were filmed and then blue-screened into a totally realistic, computer-realized haunted house. *The Seventh Guest* is like a horror movie, but it's a movie that *you control*.

How good is it? Well, before the 1992 Winter Consumer Electronics Show, Nintendo made a very large offer for exclusive video game rights to *The Seventh Guest*. They will bundle it with their CD-ROM drive for Super Nintendo.

And how many of those do they plan on selling? Their current schedule calls for 360,000 CD-ROM units (with my game) to be produced each and every month.

It's horror. It pays homage to every haunted house story I ever read, every goofy black-and-white movie I saw. When it's done, it may make people afraid to click their mouse button.

Next January, horror in the CD-ROM field, in the world of Super Nintendo, and IBM, and Sony/Phillips CD-I will be very much alive.

Nancy Holder said to me, we have to think of ourselves as storytellers -- no matter what the medium -- and not simply as novelists. This will be a whole new arena for writers.

Oh -- I had another idea. How about Dracula takes the New York subway?

It's dark enough . . .



P.O. Box 322, Circleville, NY 10019
(914) 361-1190

• SF/FANTASY

• HORROR LITERATURE

• NEW AND USED FIRST EDITIONS

• MONTHLY CATALOGS ISSUED

• WANT LIST/SEARCH SERVICE

In his new horror novel, Shirley serves up the bloody heart of a sick and rotting society with the aplomb of an Aztec surgeon on Dexedrine... Shirley's book is a solid contribution to the horror genre.

BOOKLIST

Potent, bizarre, full of raw energy...It's a good thing John Shirley is a writer. If he wasn't, he'd probably have to become a particularly inventive serial murderer to grab our attention the way he does.

INSIDE BOOKS

Pleasure is the optimum word when you're reading *Wetbones*, because every page offers the writer at his best, at his most personal.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Shirley's writing reminds me of Philip K. Dick at his most demented—a cross between Kafka and Chekov.

2 A.M. MAGAZINE

[Shirely writes at] the neon-lit frontier of sensory experience.

LOCUS

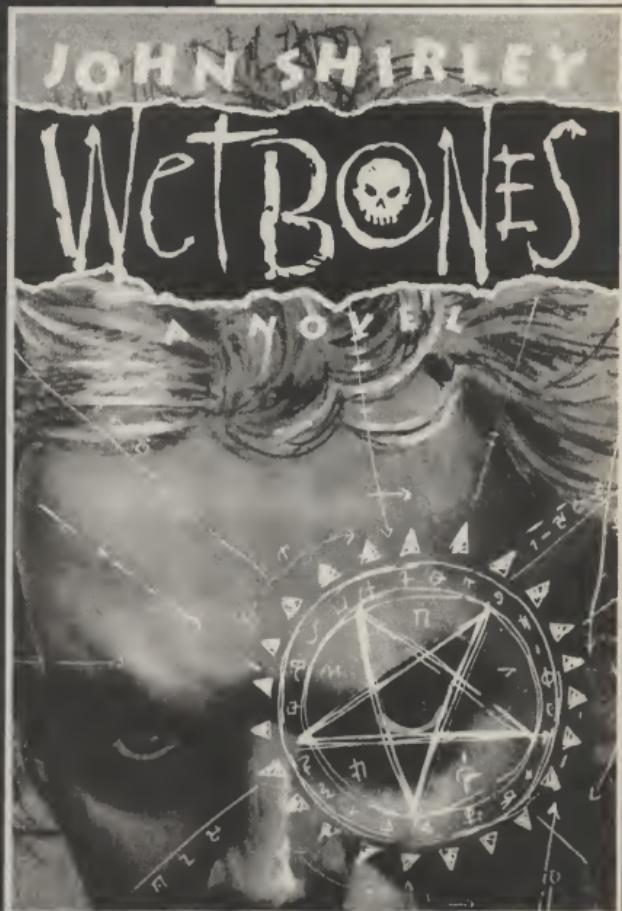
A dream of a writer.

RAMSEY CAMPBELL

Shirley reads like a high octane mixture of Ballard, William S. Burroughs, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and William Kotzwinkle, yet emerges with a cranked-up paranoiac style that is definitely his own.

NANCY A. COLLINS

One addiction is as deadly as another...



Hardcover First Edition: First Publication

Jacket art by Arnie Fenner

\$25.00

Signed slipcased edition: **\$65.00**

MARK V. ZIESING BOOKS
P.O. BOX 76
SHINGLETOWN, CA 96088

THE EXCLUSIVE

SIDNEY WILLIAMS

SIDNEY WILLIAMS is the author of several popular horror novels, including the most recent *Gneiffs*, *Azarius* and *Blood Hunter*. His short fiction turned up most recently in the HWA shared-world vampire anthology, *Under The Fang*. This dark suspense thriller is Williams' first appearance in *Cemetery Dance*.

The college newspaper headline reported that the campus was "gripped by fear." The cliche opportunity had thrilled staffers who were usually mired in the boredom of student government coverage and fraternity news.

Allison Rose, the news editor of the *Evergreen Gazette*, and a responsible journalist, was the only one who complained. She took the situation seriously, however. Everyone was convinced a killer was loose on the Pine College grounds, and that meant students were in danger.

Thomas Trenton had escaped from the Riverland Parish Jail in Aimsley, the small city just across the river. Rumore had him seeking refuge at Pine. It wasn't unreasonable. He was young and thus stood a chance of blending in there. Besides, there were several abandoned buildings on the small campus. Allison had written an editorial about them in the fall.

Now everyone had something to whisper about Trenton.

Some claimed he was living in the basement of an abandoned student teachers cottage, while others believed he was holed up in one of the old residence halls which had been shut down by fire code violations years before. He was sighted almost nightly, and more than one male student unlucky enough to bear some physical resemblance to Trenton's -- whose photo and description ran almost daily in the *Aimsley Clarion* -- got hassled or accosted.

A freshman named Bennie Iberville was maced by a nineteen-year-old freshman music major who thought he was coming into the piano studio to attack her while she was getting in some after-hours practice. He'd actually been seeking some sheet music misplaced by his girlfriend.

Pine's weirdo population also faced frequent misunderstandings and shakedowns by overzealous security guards.

Dutifully, Allison chronicled the feelings, inter-

viewing the frightened students of both sexes who worried about the lack of ample campus lighting and security personnel. She talked to a few guys who resembled Trenton, writing about their experiences as well. She wrote an editorial, calling for the administration to insure safety. She saw it as her responsibility as a journalist. She was dedicated to her calling to keep the world informed and to right wrongs when she encountered them.

At twenty-one, she was three semesters from graduation and determined to go forth into the world in pursuit of the noble grail of the fourth estate.

Because of her devotion, she worked longer hours than anyone else on the *Gazette* staff. Although she had a shock of curly blonde hair and was considered cute in spite of her slightly odd nose, she didn't date much. Most guys considered her too stern.

That troubled her at times, because she was indeed lonely, but she compensated by throwing herself even deeper into her work. In fact, she probably wouldn't have noticed if anybody had shown interest.

She saw the Trenton matter not only as an opportunity for service but also as a chance to build some impressive clips and possibly some reporting awards. Those would help later when she was ready to seek a job on a major daily upon graduation. She intended to go to the top rather than working up through the ranks at weeklies or other small papers. Those were a waste of time.

The Trenton story was sensational, the kind of story that built reputations. He was twenty now, though he'd been a teenager when he'd killed. He spent eleven months in jail before his escape. The charge had been first-degree murder in connection with the slaying of a girl named Denise Meyers.

Killer and victim had known each other through most of their high school careers. As their senior year drew to a close, he had become obsessed with her. She had been from a good family while he had been raised by grandparents after his parents' divorce. His grades were only acceptable, and everyone realized he was destined for common labor jobs.

Denise had always been cordial toward him, perhaps out of that sympathy that pretty girls often show to unattractive young men, unwittingly sending signals which are misinterpreted.

When he began to make advances, she was forced

to break the news that she only saw him as a friend. The alienation from her affections had apparently been too much for his already traumatic existence. After repeated attempts to create a relationship failed, he became angry with her, often following her and harassing her publicly at school functions.

Eventually he caught her outside a school dance and strangled her to death with an old belt. The community was shocked by the incident, yet somehow unsurprised. Those who knew them should have seen it coming, and later they wondered what had gone on inside the boy's mind.

Allison had wondered too, and now she wondered what was in his thoughts as he lurked around the campus fringes. Was he going to repeat his previous actions now that he'd tasted fear and power?

The letter was on her desk when she stopped by the *Gazette* offices after her lit class. It was mixed in with some press releases left for her to input as filler for the next edition. The envelope was a dusty white business size, and only her name was scribbled on front in pencil.

When she opened it, a wrinkled piece of paper fell out. It was a document list from the library, but on the back was a note.

Allison,

I've read your news stories. I know they will catch me, but I want the world to know my side

of it first. Please help me. If you are as good a reporter as you seem, you will know where to find me. Come alone tonight and we'll talk.

There was no signature. Refolding it, she felt her heart fluttering, and the blood seemed to rush through her body. It was an opportunity she could never have imagined, let alone hope for. It would guarantee her a decent job and probably capture her national attention.

Just before the library's closing hour, she slipped from the reading room into the shadowy periodical stacks where she summoned the elevator car. The narrow shaft which led down to the basement had always seemed like something out of a Saturday matinee adventure, a passage to a hidden underground world. Now her fingers trembled as she jabbed the control to take her downward.

She would not allow herself to be afraid as she stepped off the car a moment later. The basement was dark with only a few shafts of moonlight slipping in through the small windows near the ceiling, but she contained her fear. There was too much potential here to be afraid.

Without looking for the lights, she moved toward the back of the room. Not many students knew about the documents depository, but it was filled with governmental papers as well as old yearbooks and excess *Gazette*



paintings. She was aware of it because she'd been there once to collect old newspapers for a retrospective.

Cautiously, she moved forward and opened the old wooden door which gave access to the main storage room. The musty smell of slowly deteriorating paper touched her nostrils as she edged forward, trying to let her eyes adjust.

"Hello," she whispered.

The blackness was so consuming, she found it hard to see even after several seconds. She could only discern outlines and shadows. She might not have spotted him crouching in the corner if he hadn't shuffled about in search of a more comfortable position.

"Allison?" he asked in a frightened voice.

"Yes, Mr. Trenton?"

"I want to talk to you. To tell you about everything. I know you won't approve. I couldn't expect that, but from reading your work I think you might at least try to understand, and that's all I'm asking."

She wanted to find a light now, wanted to be able to see his eyes and read his expression. She took a step back, sliding her hand along the wall.

"No. No light," he said. "Someone might see it."

Allison had to position herself beneath the window to get enough moonlight to see her notebook.

"Why did you kill her?" she asked without hesitation.

"I'll talk about that later. Maybe tomorrow night. First I want to tell you about who I am."

Allison hadn't thought about more than one meeting with him. The thought troubled her, but finally she squelched ideas of danger and said: "Okay."

Her fingers trembled anew as she began to scribble down his words, but there was more excitement than fear.

He gave wonderful quotes. She was reminded of Charles Dickens' first person description of a madman. She couldn't remember which book it was from, but she'd heard it as a dramatic reading in a high school speech competition.

"My parents, it was like they didn't want me any more when they split up. I reminded them of each other, so they didn't want to have to look at me every day and be reminded of the mistake they'd made in getting together.

"I never understood why love was such a cruel thing because I loved both of them and it only caused me pain."

"Didn't your grandparents love you?"

"It was an obligation. They'd already raised one set of children, and here they had it to do over again. Grandchildren are supposed to be something you can have fun with without responsibility."

His voice quavered, but he talked on about childhood and the cruelty of other children.

Allison scribbled furiously, smiling in the darkness at the thought of the story she would write. As the hours crept toward morning, she realized they would not finish tonight. There was too much to cover even though she

was willing to work until dawn.

"You'll have to come back tomorrow," he said. "I don't want anybody to see you leaving. Will you be here?" he asked.

"What are you going to do once this is finished?"

"I'll turn myself in, after I'm finished. Not before. People have to understand me."

"The same time?"

"Yeah."

Allison went through classes in a near daze. She was tired from lack of rest, and it showed, but it was her enthusiasm for the interview that kept her thoughts dancing.

At the first opportunity, she went up to the *Gazette* office and began to type up her notes, using her own disk to store the information in order to preserve her secrecy.

"When did you first decide to kill?" she asked, her words almost like an echo off the hollow walls of the depository.

"It's hard to say," his voice responded through the shadows. "Maybe a long time ago. Maybe when I first realized I would die someday. I thought about that when I was a little boy. It occurred to me that you have to do something to tell death no. I realized movie stars don't die. I'm no artist, though. I never had encouragement from my family. For a while, I thought that loving somebody could make you immortal. I thought loving a girl and marrying her would let me survive and live on through children. I knew we'd treat them better than my folks did me. I knew we'd love them. But she didn't want to love me."

"There are other girls," Allison suggested.

"No. There was only this one, and I knew love wasn't the answer because she never noticed me, no matter how hard I tried. She didn't really know I was alive."

"So the love turned to hate."

"Yeah. That's what it was. It turned into hate. So I started to see that hate could do the same thing. It could help me defeat death, and it could give me power. I couldn't make her love me, but I could take other action."

Allison shivered. She had listened to him for a long time, had begun in part to feel sorry for him as he'd convinced her about his childhood. Now she could see the depth of his twisted thoughts. Madness was shining through. He was lacking a sense of wrong, was driven by his own thoughts of glory which justified his acts, yet it was easy to see why that sort of thing might go unnoticed in casual contact with him.

He had come to see what he was doing as something positive, something that enriched him. It did not matter that someone was hurt in the process. He had been deprived and he didn't intend to let anything stand in his way any longer in achieving his desires and fulfill-

ments.

The pre-dawn interrupted the interview once again. They agreed on another meeting, and Allison went back to her room where she slept through her first three classes.

She didn't go to her afternoon language class either because she wanted to transcribe the new notes. Mickey, the assistant editor was on the phone, so she went straight for her terminal, did her work and escaped before he could hang up and ask her questions she didn't want to deal with right now. She had to have some rest before night arrived.

"I didn't think you'd come back again."

She stepped forward into the darkness. "Why not?"

He seemed surprised by her question.

"Then you haven't heard?"

"Heard what? I took a nap."

"It's been all over the news. I saw it on the television in the student center."

"You were in the student center?"

"Trenton was arrested in California. He didn't have any ties here, so that's where he ran."

She backed toward the door, suddenly confused. She'd believed him, accepted his note and then his descriptions of his childhood. Now he emerged slowly from the shadows, for the first time letting a shaft of moonlight strike his features. She realized the resemblance to the photos was minimal.

"I'm not Trenton," he confessed. "I'm sorry."

"What were you trying to prove?"

"I wanted to talk to you, to tell you about myself. I had to change things a little, based on what I'd read about Trenton, but some was true. That's why you believed me, I guess. My parents weren't divorced. I was illegitimate, and that's why my grandparents resented me. The rest is accurate, though. My thinking about immortality and love. I really did want to tell somebody what I was thinking, and what I was feeling. I had to tell."

"You haven't killed anyone?"

He shook his head. "Not yet. I had to get ready, make sure things were chronicled. I can act. I proved that, but I'm not a good writer. Someone had to take things down. I thought of you because you're the one I thought was so cute. You never even knew me."

"I haven't written a story yet."

"They'll find your notebooks. They'll work from there, figure things out. The essence of my soul will be revealed."

She felt tears streaming down her cheeks now.

"For a long time after I first saw you, I wanted you to notice me. I've read your stories ever since you started writing for the paper. When you wrote about Trenton, I knew I could get your attention. I told myself I left the note to get closer to you, but I knew deep down all along

what I had to do. All I want is to be remembered."

"Your newspaper said the campus is gripped by fear. Now it has a reason. Not Trenton. He's got his immortality. Now I want mine."

She saw the blade gleam in the moonlight just before she stumbled over a bundle of *Gazettes*. She could not stifle a scream.

In the news stories, Allison was described as the "schoolgirl journalist who interviewed her own killer." In the *Gazette* headline they said the campus was "shocked and saddened." It was true, even though it was a cliche.

- CD



BORDERLANDS 2 edited by Thomas F. Monteleone

The second volume of the finest anthology series of the decade. Cutting edge imaginative fiction. Award-winning stories by Joe Lansdale, F. Paul Wilson, Charles L. Grant, et al. Custom Leider dj, slipcased, signed by all. **\$60.00**



UNDER THE FANG edited by Robert R. McCammon

The first HWA, Inc. shared world anthology. This book was a bestseller in paperback. The ultimate collection of **vampire** tales! Great stories by McCammon, Nancy Collins, Gorman, Laymon, Williamson, et al. Custom Jill Bauman dj, slipcased, signed by all contributors. These are going fast! **\$75.00**

Borderlands Press Box 32333 Balt MD 21208

VISA/MC (800)528-3310

The Ultimate Book On Cinema Outré

CUT! Horror Writers On Horror Film
edited by Christopher Golden

Essays, articles, interviews, by Clive Barker, John Farris, Ray Garton, Joe R. Lansdale, Anne Rice, John Skipp, Craig Spector, & 16 more writers who love weird, scary flicks!



Slipcased, signed (by all but Ms. Rice) ltd to 500 copies. (and lots of pictures!) The **only** hardcover. Check/M.O. to Borderlands Press, Dept CD, Box 32333 Balt MD 21208

VISA/MASTERCARD CALL (800)528-3310

TERRA EX ANIMA

T. LIAM McDONALD

NOTE: T. Liam McDonald disappeared into the Yucatan jungle last month to write about the archaeological excavations at Uxmal. Before vanishing he delivered the following article (the first of a series) in place of his regular "Profiles in Terror" column, which was scuttled when mail to Barbara Michaels went awry. With any luck he'll be back next issue with the great lost interview with Ms. Michaels.

Let's talk about horror: what it is, where it is now, and where it's going. Let's talk about the metaphysics of horror.

Right off the bat, "conventional" horror as a genre does not exist; at least not in the way that science fiction or mystery exist as genres. Conventional horror is the invention of publishers, a mere marketing tool by which to package and present a certain type of fiction. It is the end result of Stephen King's massive success. To publishers, horror is paperbacks with lurid foil covers depicting skeletons.

This approach to horror-as-commodity is not serving horror well. Look at the most recent example of this bookrack cribdeath: Matthew Costello's *Darkborn*. Costello delivered a superbly crafted, well-told tale that emotionally involved its readers every step of the way. He dwelt unabashedly (and with great skill) upon religion and metaphysics and time paradoxes. He created a work that in the late seventies or early eighties would have been published by a hardcover house with some decent,

non-genre-ghetto dust-jacket art. In short, it would have been Costello's *Carrie* or *Ghost Story*.

But what is it now?

Another paperback with a skeleton on the cover.

It deserved better. The genre ghetto is eating away at quality horror. The lousy writing is swallowing up the good writing, creating this vast wad of products that are indistinguishable from one another. How do you tell a book like *Darkborn* from your average Zebra knock-off?

But let us not dwell on what publishers are doing wrong with horror. We all know that already. Let's look at where horror is, or at least may be, going.

First: the definition of horror. Among people who think about these things it is generally agreed that horror is any literature that explores the darkness within our world or ourselves.

This, however, is not the definition that the publishers have engraved upon the brain engrams of the mass readership. To them, horror is vampires, slashers, werewolves, monsters and Freddy Kruger. True, these are all horror icons, and, when used properly, still can pack a punch. (Though, personally, if I see another vampire novel I think I may clot.)

But by our definition these are but a fraction of what makes up the literature of darkness. Who has written horror? Shakespeare, Faulkner, Conrad, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Borges, Murdoch, William Burroughs, Joyce Carol Oates, Jack London, D. H. Lawrence -- I could

go on, but you get the point. Horror isn't just monsters in the closet or Stephen King. Horror is a walk on the dark side, and many many writers have chosen to take this walk. And where do we learn more about ourselves and our world than when we confront the dark?

Now, however, horror is often merely props. Too many books are released that deal with wooden people in wooden plots moved by wooden writers. It's not unlike mysteries, where the only good ones are the ones that deal with more than just the crime at hand. As Edmund Wilson said in his notorious lambasting of the mystery genre: "Who cares who killed Roger Ackroyd?" The form of the mystery is merely a puzzle, and though puzzles are diverting and fun they don't usually make for great writing in and of themselves. Mystery is at its best when it is about more than just solving a crime. The same applies to horror. When something is stripped of its substance, all that is left is the form, and with horror, the form often cannot stand without the substance.

Just what is the substance?

Here's where we get to the point. (You knew there was a point to all this, didn't you?) If horror is to survive the '90s it will have to dig deeper. We are on the verge of a new millennium, and millennial panic is subtly snaking its way throughout our society. Our culture is overwhelmingly influenced by Judeo-Christian thought and teaching, and even the many people who don't swallow this particular mytho-ethi-

cal doctrine are affected by it. Somewhere, in the back of our brains, we know that the *Apocalypse* *may* be just around the corner. One of the eternal archetypes found in *every* culture is that of the end-days, armageddon, judgement.

Even if we totally reject this particular dogma, entering the third millennium is making a great many people a little strange. As we draw nearer to 2000, people continue to look for religious alternatives to the mainstream faiths which have failed to satisfy their spiritual needs. The booming "New Age" market, a market that is astonishing in its ability to trivialize anything it gets its hands on, is one example of this. What is it other than a frantic search for answers to the mysteries of the universe?

We can also see some mass search for meaning in the incredible popularity of the late Jungian high priest of world myth: Joseph Campbell. He has become the new guru for a people looking for answers to questions that they are only now beginning to learn are eternal questions. All members of the human community have asked these questions of themselves at one time or another. They are the common bonds which are expressed over and over again in myths from disparate cultures. Why do all races and faiths have a flood myth? A judgement myth? An exodus myth? Why do all shamans describe the same states of religious ecstasy? Your resurrected god may be called Osiris or Quetzalcoatl or Jesus Christ, but the story rarely changes. It is obvious that we are linked by more than the mere sharing of a planet. We are joined at the basest, most primeval level of consciousness. Archetypes are engraved upon us, within us, and we need to express them over and over again. Often -- very often -- these archetypes are not pleasant.

In fact, they are downright horrifying.

Example: Over and over again we see incest in myths. Incest is often

at the base of creation, as it is with the Navajo, Hindu, Celtic, and Judeo-Christian myths. Just where do you think Enoch, son of Cain, came from if not an incestuous act? Modern man finds this repugnant, but that doesn't overcome the fact that the Oedipal myth is part of our heritage. Now we have Andrew Vachas, who deals so beautifully and subtly with mythic forms that we don't even notice how he's playing our emotions. Vachas' fiction drives not only to the heart of the incest myth, and its unpleasant reality, but to the very core of our primal nature. His villains are humans with their civilization stripped away (werewolves) or who merely prey to "sustain" their lives (vampires). He shows us the underside of the world. It is this dark side, this ugly side, that supports the sunny side: what we like to think of as the *civilized* side. *Our* side.

Or is it?

We all have come to this point in civilization with a burden of bloodshed, war, disease, conflict, disintegration, and holy terror. It is our accumulated world heritage. The battle between good and evil is being waged in every corner of the world at every moment. In America early in this century, the "good" was the white pioneer and the "evil" was the Indian. Now look how much that has changed, and in so short a period of time. Now the evil is racism and intolerance and the good is understanding and fellowship. Evil is drugs and good is sobriety. Evil is crime and good is following the codes of society. Evil is the anti-Christ and good is the devout believer.

Now, does anyone out there think it's all so clear-cut as that? Does not a massive grey area separate good from evil? An area of mere survival? One of difference? Is not this area the battleground for horror fiction?

In other words: ask a hundred people for the definition of good and evil and you will get a hundred different answers.

But below those hundred an-

swers, throbbing at the core of our existence, is the same base answer: civilization. However we define it, whether it be by societal norms or individual goals, we all cling to our civilization; to that structure of behavior which we have developed throughout our evolution. Whether civilization is God and Jesus or home and country or me and mine, it is what we like to think separates us from the animals.

Yet, in epochal terms, just how long ago was it that *we* were "animals," lacking civilization? It's not so long, is it? Those savage, primal instincts -- things which we now might define as *evil* -- have shadowed us all the way up the evolutionary ladder. We all have an innate capacity for evil and destruction.

There is still another paradox, which is that life comes out of destruction. Violence and creation are flip sides of the same coin. Our world was shaped from chaos. Death allows for new birth. The gun that may kill your loved ones can also protect them. The Bible that teaches "thou shalt not kill" and "love thy neighbor" has been an effective tool of destruction for three thousand years.

There it is again: the grey area.

It is the battleground where what we fight is not so far from what we are.

Horror fiction, far and above everything else, returns to this again and again. There is an eternal, mythological, metaphysical underpinning to horror. Flesh is weak, brittle, impermanent. Its prime purpose is to house the *anima* (in the Classical sense), the life force. Horror that dwells on physical destruction may disgust us, but horror which plunges into the *metaphysical*, into what threatens your very being, is what we find most disturbing. It is the threat to that order which we find so precious -- whether it be personal or societal -- which lies at the heart of all good horror. A book like *The Exorcist* plugs into the universal fear

that our "soul" (for lack of a better word) may be in danger. All flesh is grass, as they say. But what about spirit? We may not cling to any religious dogma, we may even be atheists, but we prize our *anima*, our individuality, our distilled essence.

If horror is to succeed in the changing '90s and beyond, it will have to continue to probe that which is best about it. For lack of a better term, we can call it metaphysical horror, *terror ex anima*: terror of the soul and from the soul. The *anima* is not dependent on a god-figure or religion, it simply *is*. It is what lies at the center of our individual existences. The best modern horror fiction is often that which plunges into this realm, threatens it, assaults it, defends it, et cetera. It is that point in a Peter Straub novel when the veil that separates the physical and the metaphysical begins to shimmer and we glimpse *something*. But what is it? Stephen King and Robert McCammon and Joe Lansdale explore those subtle American myths that we live with every day but don't see: the myths found in tv and movies, learn about in history class, and hear around the campfire. McCammon's *Boy's Life* is a loving, beautiful attic of American myth; at times joyful and at times horrifying. Lansdale gives those same myths a good kick in the ass and hunkers down to tell a story with a touch of Mark Twain in his voice. Ray Garton probes that odd juncture of the religious and the sensual with disturbing ease, and F. Paul Wilson is currently constructing an epic metaphysical mythology in his "Reborn" books, drawing on the powerful Catholic symbols with which he was raised. (And what Catholic hasn't pondered with mute horror the transubstantiation: the theoretical metamorphosis of simple bread and wine into actual -- as opposed to metaphorical -- *flesh* and *blood*. Weekly cannibalism! What ripe ground for horror!) Charles Grant and Chet Williamson delve into the psyche to find fear, while Ramsey Campbell and Tom Ligotti

harken back to primitive religions to explore the grey area of the "ancient truth." Joyce Carol Oates slides in and out of horror motifs with such skill that we don't often notice, we merely *feel* it in the power of her writing. Thomas Harris shows us the human beast stripped of those select bits of civilization which govern proper behavior; unchained to roam among us freely.

The list could go on, but you get the idea. Horror is driven by metaphysics, and readers are getting more selective and more astute about picking up on those metaphysics. As a whole, it seems that the readership is becoming more savvy, and with this they will demand more. Each of those elements of fiction mentioned above are found throughout world mythology. Romans, Greeks, Celts, Indo-Europeans, pre-Colombian South American cultures, Africans, Eastern Indians, American Indians, Chinese: they all deal with these same elements in their myths. These were -- and are -- a necessary part of society. They are part of the effort to understand that which threatens us, to understand Chaos so we can fend it off. The occult, the supernatural, the horrific: these areas of our reality touch us on a spiritual level more than any other. They strike closer to our primal emotions. (Before we knew how to love, we knew how to be afraid.) Carl Jung's first great leap into an understanding of the unconscious mind was his study of the occult; a study which he returned to again and again throughout his entire life, and which would eventually sow the seeds of his split with Freud. Jung was an unabashed mystic and student of alchemy and parapsychology (something which Freud had trouble seeing as anything more than an extension of sexual dementia), and he saw in supernatural phenomena a clue to the fundamental riddles of human behavior.

So what will happen to horror in the next decade?

Who knows? Chances are that people who in the past who have

gone looking to horror for their entertainment will now look for horror which seems to go deeper and probe harder those questions that grow continually more prominent as we speed towards the new millennium. Horror fiction and film is extremely valuable to those societies which lack an active, functional myth system. They are grand dramas that shine lights in the dark and tell us a little bit about our worlds and ourselves. They also take us away for awhile from the mundane rigors of daily life and guide us through a landscape of imagination, where good and evil and the grey between battle for control of our world, ourselves, our very souls.

**WANTED:
GENRE
FANS!**

Looking for the latest titles in
**HORROR/DARK FANTASY
FAN PRESS
SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY
DETECTIVE/CRIME
MYSTERY**

Plus rare, out-of-print titles,
new and used first-editions,
discounts,
buy and trade.
Plus a Money Back Guarantee!

Call or write:

**NICHOLAS J. CERTO
P.O. BOX 322
CIRCLEVILLE, NY 10919
(914) 361-1190**

MAMA'S BOY

C. S. FUQUA

C.S. FUQUA, a friendly gentleman from Huntsville, Alabama, has sold his short fiction to various professional markets. "Mama's Boy" -- a creepy, somewhat traditional tale of terror -- is Fuqua's first appearance in *Cemetery Dance*.

Everyone could see where Carl Baker was headed, even me. After two years on his belly in Vietnam, Carl had come home with a habit most people called "a shame." They'd shake their heads, say, "It's terrible, but I hear a lot of 'em get hooked over there," and go on about their business, figuring that sooner or later he'd get his head together and body clean. After all, he had his mother. In time, with her help, he'd be fine.

I was twelve then. We lived in a remote northern part of the county directly across a pond from the Baker house. I saw Carl nearly every day, walking around the pond, hands in pockets, glassy eyes staring into the ripples of the water. I'd stand beside him sometime for upwards of half-an-hour before he'd acknowledge me. Then we'd toss a football or take a walk through the woods. He'd tell me about the women he'd been with in 'Nam and the great drugs he got his hands on there. But, when he was with me, he never consumed anything other than water or an occasional beer. My presence, I suppose, was good enough. Maybe he saw something special in me, maybe the childhood he'd lost in war, I don't know. In those days, though, I was his only friend.

Out of politeness, I'd ask how his mother was getting on, and he'd shrug, his face going cold, unreadable, say, "Okay." I don't know if he really liked his mother or not. A frail, brittle woman, she returned after forty years of nursing when Carl returned home, hoping, I suppose, to devote her remaining years in service to Carl's needs, but Carl didn't need much -- a few bucks, a fix, and a patch of grass to lie on as he drifted into oblivion. One day, he didn't come back. Too much smack slammed into his brain, leaving him a vegetable.

A month after Carl's OD, Mrs. Baker took him home from the hospital. Mom stopped by the house a couple of times, but Mrs. Baker never invited her inside, talking instead from the front porch for a few minutes

before returning to her son. Mom said she admired Mrs. Baker's determination, but she wondered if the old lady was physically capable.

Over the next few months, I rarely saw Mrs. Baker. She ordered all her groceries and medicines delivered, each paid for at the door. I once saw a man with a black satchel -- a doctor, I assumed -- get out of a blue Buick and go inside, but, as far as I know, after the doctor's single visit, no one but Mrs. Baker ever saw her son.

By Valentine's Day, Carl crossed my mind only when I looked out my bedroom window to see lights from the Baker house shimmering on the pond. I'd get images of him lying in bed and start to feel trapped. I'd turn away, slide into bed, making a tent with the covers, and lose myself in my school books as Mom and Dad downstairs watched Johnny Carson.

One warm night in early March, I had begun to nod off when something hit my bedroom's outer wall. Faint laughter drifted up from the TV. I sat up as another knock sounded against my window. I slipped out of bed, over to the glass. Pale light glittered on the pond. Carl's face, twisted in agony, flickered in my mind, the image abruptly vanishing as footsteps started up the stairs. I slipped back into bed, settling as the door opened and Mom looked in. A few minutes later, I drifted into sleep, figuring the knocks against my wall were nothing more than pine cones falling from the tree outside my window.

Two nights later, it happened again, a solid knock, like knuckles rapping, not pine cones. I searched the darkness, saw nothing but the single light in the Baker house. I turned away from the window, froze. A bump against the outer wall. Then again, and again, a gradual progression around the side wall, the inner wall, to my door.

"Mom?" I whispered. *Thump.* "Dad?"

I crossed the room to the door, jerked it open as Mom turned toward me at the head of the stairs.

"What are you doing up, young man?"

"I -- uh . . ." What could I tell her? My room was twenty feet off the ground. Who'd believe me? "I need to pee," I said.

Back in bed, I expected the knocking to start again,

but what came were screams. Faint, guttural groans, ending in suffocating shrieks. I twisted out of bed and hit the door at a run.

"Mom! Dad!" I took the stairs in twos. They bolted from the den, their faces drained. I raced back to my room, my parents following. Mom switched on the light. They glanced around the room, their questioning gazes falling finally to me at the window.

"Listen," I said in a hushed voice.

"To what?" Dad said irritably.

Frogs croaked at the pond. Night birds chirped. "Somebody was screaming."

A roll of the eyes.

"I swear!"

Dad shook his head, left the room. Mom paused in the doorway, flipped off the light. "Just a bad dream, honey. Back to bed. It's late." A few minutes later, the TV downstairs silenced, and I heard my parents' bedroom door at the end of the hall softly close. Then came faint music from their radio, masking the random sounds of night from their room. Sometime later, the screams started again, faint, muffled. I wrapped the pillow around my head and began to hum.

The following night, nothing banged against my walls, but the screams began as Carson set into his monologue. I called for my parents, but only Mom came. She sat on my bedside, listened for a few moments, then lay her palm against my forehead. "Is something bothering you, Kevin? You need to talk to somebody?"

Great. She thought I was a nut case. Next stop, the base psychiatrist, one of those convenient military freebies. Dad, a Navy machinist, had three years left before retirement, and Mom was determined to use any service she didn't have to pay for. I was glad I'd kept my mouth shut about the slaps against the wall. She tucked me in and left me lying in a pale, steel-gray shaft of moonlight. A quarter-hour passed; another. Then screams. The television audience cackled.

Every night, anguished shrieks echoed across the pond. Mom and Dad could not hear them, secured in their bedroom at the front of the house, the radio playing softly within. I would sink deeper under the covers, wrapping my pillow around my head until sleep finally overtook me.

The following week, Dad shipped out on the *Lexington* for a month's sea duty. The night he left, a rapid slapping circled the walls of my room, ending with a bang against my door. Mom shouted from downstairs, "Kevin! Go to sleep!" Then came the screams, more anguished than ever. Gooseflesh waltzed up my neck. I threw off the covers, stomped downstairs, grabbed Mom's hand and pulled her toward my room, ignoring her demands of "What's going on?"

"Listen," I said as we entered.

"Is this about . . . ?"

"Mom, please, just listen."

With a reluctant sigh, she leaned out the window beside me. Nothing. She pulled back in, shaking her head sadly. *Poor boy*, her eyes said. Abruptly, her expression changed. She snapped around, her mouth unhinged. Nightmarish shrills snaked through pines and oaks. She glared across the pond at the Baker house. A moment later, she fled to her room to call the police.

She hung up, came into my doorway, slipping on a windbreaker. "I'm going over to the Bakers', Kevin. You stay here."

As soon as I heard the car door slam shut, I yanked on my jeans and tennis shoes, slipped out of the house, circled the pond and skirted through Mrs. Baker's back yard. A police car pulled into the front yard, followed by Mom's car. I crept up to the only lighted window and peeked in, gasping as my gaze briefly met Carl Baker's. Something stirred behind those dilated, milky pools, a sense of relief, of gratefulness.

His room door swung open. A tall, uniformed policeman stepped in, his expression sickening. Mrs. Baker pushed by, placing herself between him and her son. Beyond the officer, Mom waited in the hallway. The policeman turned away, and I heard him mutter that he'd radio for an ambulance. Mom backed away from the door as Mrs. Baker knelt beside the bed and began to stroke the sweating brow of her son. His head rolled side to side, tongue wagging between his lips. Mrs. Baker began to cry, pressing her cheek to his shoulder.

I crouched below the windowsill until the ambulance arrived. I rose cautiously as two attendants situated a stretcher beside the bed, positioning themselves at Carl's head and feet to transfer him. They threw off the yellow spotted sheet, both pausing momentarily, eyes widening at the cadaverous chest heaving gray and crinkled, skin sinking between ribs with every struggled breath. Cloth strips bound Carl's thin and brittle wrists and ankles to the bedposts. Scabbing flesh clung to the catheter running from his penis into the urine bag at the foot of the bed.

One attendant narrowed his eyes, swallowed, then transferred the urine bag to the gurney while the other untied Carl's bindings. The man at Carl's head slipped his hands under Carl's shoulders as the other lifted Carl's knees.

Mrs. Baker cried, "He belongs here!" The policeman held her gently back as the attendants lifted her son. Carl shrieked mindlessly during the brief instant he floated from bed to gurney, bottom sheet stuck to his backside.

My mother's face turned ashen. She spun away and vomited.

The attendants dropped Carl, causing him to writhe and shriek as thousands of tiny roaches skittered from underneath him to race down the gurney's legs. Carl flailed his arms and legs helplessly as the roaches burrowed out from folds of sheet and skin. His back and



buttocks had become a massive bed sore, developing and healing repeatedly until the bottom sheet had grown into his skin. The policeman glared in disbelief and disgust at the bed where Carl had lain unmoved for months. A thick mass of tiny roaches scurried in fear of the light.

I spun away in a tripping, tumbling run home, scratching my hands, ripping my jeans. I entered through the garage and made it to my bedroom window as the ambulance pulled out of Mrs. Baker's yard. Mom's car was the next to leave, and, finally, the policeman's. I tried to shake Carl's tormented image from my mind, but could only soften it by thinking of Carl's eyes, the way they had somehow thanked me.

I undressed quickly and was in bed by the time Mom came upstairs. She opened my door, and I knew she was looking in at me, probably wondering how a mother could subject her son to such horror, but love can be far more cruel than hatred. She closed the door softly, and, a few minutes later, I heard her retching in the bathroom.

She woke me as dawn slivered through the trees and bathed the pond in gray iciness. She sat on my bedside, looking frail, drained. She reached back, took

my hand. "I'm sorry," she said. "Poor, poor man."

The state placed Carl in a long-term convalescent home, his care VA funded. As for Mrs. Baker, she stayed in her house. No charges were filed, but, in the long run, it didn't matter. In June, the same policeman who'd answered Mom's call about the screams found Mrs. Baker dead.

Twelve years later, lung cancer killed my dad. And last summer, a drunk murdered Mom in a head-on crash. I moved back to this house last October. The Baker place across the pond is still standing, but kids have shattered all the windows, and termites have weakened the structure so that it sags in the middle.

After that terrible night, I tried to forget Carl, but, lately, I can't get him off my mind. Maybe it's because I see that old house every day; maybe not. In any case, I'm sure he's still alive, although I have no idea where he's living. I must find out. And soon.

Last night, frenzied knocking rattled the outer wall of my old bedroom.

-- CD

THE VERDICT'S IN

"Gutsy. Anyone can shake their fist at the injustice of censorship, but **GAUNTLET**'s got the balls to correct the problem."

Penthouse

"Feisty!"

Playboy

"An Amazing Achievement"

Fact Sheet Five

6 x 9 trade paperback, with full-color cover - 336 pages! - Available NOW!



"Disturbingly informative."

F. Paul Wilson

"A true guerilla for the First Amendment"

Bentley Little

"Uncomfortable, infuriating and invigorating."

Kevin J. Anderson

"Stimulating Reading"

Robert Bloch

Bram Stoker and World Fantasy Nominee

GAUNTLET IS A WINNER!!

Issue #2 The Politically (In)Correct Special

Original Fiction by: Nancy A. Collins, Elizabeth Massie, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Hodge and James Kisner, plus an **exclusive** comic-strip adaptation of F. Paul Wilson's "Peits."

Commentary and Satire from: Tom Monteleone, Harlan Ellison, Michael R. Collings on Steven King, John Shirley, Rex Miller ... & more!

Expanded comics section with: Kate Worley (*Omaha the Cat Dancer*), Harvey Pekar, MAD's William M. Gaines, censorship in death of cartoonist Dori Seda, Joe Coleman, Russ Miller ... & more!

Unique Perspectives on: Lenny Bruce, the Persian Gulf War, abortion and 84-pages on the "politically correct."

Issue #1 Banned in Canada, #2 at U.S. State prisons and both considered too hot for Waldenbooks. Issue #3 just as hot. Purchase a copy and find out what caused all the fuss!

Add \$2 for 4th class or \$3 for 1st class postage for each issue. Canadians add \$4 (Check one):

- Issue #3 for \$12.95
- 2 years for \$24 (issues 3 & 4)
- #2 - Stephen King Special still available - \$10.95 + \$2 p&h

Make check to GAUNTLET & mail coupon to GAUNTLET, Dept. CD92, 309 Powell Rd. Springfield, PA 19064.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD MATHESON & R. C. MATHESON

Conducted by STANLEY WIATER

One of the most overworked cliches is to say of someone they "need no introduction." However, in the field of dark fantasy, I can state without hesitation this is truly the case with Richard Matheson. As the title of a bio-bibliography of his work states so succinctly: "He Is Legend." Undeniably one of the modern masters of fantastic fiction, Matheson's credits need only a cursory mention here: Early novels such as *I Am Legend*, *The Shrinking Man*, and *Hell House*. (All of which he has also adapted 'o the screen.) Short story collections such as *Shock!* and *Third from the Sun*. Teleplays for movies made for television such as *Duel* and *The Night Stalker*. Later novels such as *Somewhere In Time* and *What Dreams May Come*.

Just as remarkable is the fact that of the four children Richard and Ruth Matheson have brought into this world, three of them are also professional writers. Daughter Ali has written for *Moonlighting* and *Amazing Stories*, and is currently working on a network sitcom. Among his credits, son Christian is the co-creator of the popular *Bill and Ted* (of *Excellent Adventures* fame) motion picture and animated cartoon series.

Meanwhile, son Richard Christian Matheson has made his mark in a range of mediums, from television to motion pictures to prose. He has written over 400 television scripts and worked in the industry as a story editor, and producer, for a wide variety of series from *The A-Team* to *Dukes of Hazzard* to *Amazing Stories*. (Where he adapted one of his

stories for an episode.) So far, "R.C." has produced but a single collection of short stories, *Scars*, though more books are on the way, as you will see.

Consider for just a moment the odds of one son or daughter following in the same career path of their parent, and then imagine the chances of three of your children becoming successful writers on their own! Remarkable to say the least.

But I digress. Let me just add that the occasion to conduct the interview was before a live audience at the 2nd World Horror Convention, which occurred in March of this year. Richard Matheson was the invited "writer guest of honor," while his son, Richard Christian Matheson, was "special media guest of honor." It was then my honor and pleasure to check in with them regarding past, present, and future projects.

(NOTE: For purposes of identification, Richard Matheson is identified as "Matheson" for his responses, while Richard Christian Matheson is in turn identified as "Richard.")

WIATER: If I may begin on a personal note, when I was a younger man first discovering the modern masters of fantasy fiction, it was primarily due to four authors that I was inspired to become a writer myself. Those four were Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Charles Beaumont -- and even though his last name didn't begin with a "B" -- Richard Matheson.

MATHESON: My middle name is Burton.

WIATER: I knew it! [laughs] Actually, my first question is for R.C. I'm curious to know what it was like growing up in the home of a well-established writer? I freely confess I would have loved to have been Richard Matheson's son in that environment.

MATHESON: It's not too late for that. [laughs]

RICHARD: You would have really loved it. Because on top of being a creative environment, it was full of laughter, a lot of good feelings, and support. Interesting people were always there. Not only was it a very Bohemian home, it was actually a wonderful place to grow up.

WIATER: As a choice of professions, it's amazing enough to realize that R.C. chose to become a writer as well. Yet it's even more incredible that two other offspring are professional writers. What did you do to instill this passion for the written word in your family -- lock them in a closet and make them proofread all your work when they were still children?

MATHESON: As a matter of fact, I didn't expect any of them to become writers, because they saw me struggling around the house *kvetching* all the time about it. Richard was well on his way to becoming a drummer in a band -- and still plays marvelous drums to this day. Ali was going to become a singer on the stage -- she has a gorgeous singing voice. Christian was getting his Master's Degree

in stage direction. I suppose what it is, when you're exposed to something all your life, it starts to impinge itself on you, regardless of the other interests that you have. It's the daily influence -- which you don't impose on them -- it's just the environment they grow up in that makes writing seem like a sensible way to proceed.

WIATER: R.C., did you consciously decide at an early age to become a writer? Or was it something almost pre-destined, in the way that there are families of actors, such as the Fondas and the Carradines?

RICHARD: I wanted to be a Carradine, but they wouldn't take me. [laughs] In school I think just more and more of my interest was in English, and as I continued to write papers and reports, it became clear to me that's what I wanted to do. And my

dad was the perfect mentor to have around the house.

WIATER: As the major literary influence in the house, would you say that the fact you often wrote of the fantastic was a reason for your children to also become involved, in varying degrees, with writing stories of horror or fantasy?

MATHESON: It's either that, or it was just part of their nature. Again, I imagine it's what you're exposed to. But in this case -- fantasy -- I think they have to have some sort of built-in receptivity to it, and obviously they did.

WIATER: R.C., do you want to dispute that -- or do you agree?

RICHARD: If my dad said it, it must be true. [laughs] Actually, all I can

think is that the decade I grew up in -- the Sixties -- was so full of aberrant and unusual thinking that was really *de regeur* -- just being in that period of time, things were *not* as they seemed. And that added to the whole approach that I took to my fiction. Although I write fantastic fiction from time to time, I think what I really write about is irony -- whether it's drama or humor or horror. It's just what strikes me is the ironic component.

MATHESON: I might add all three have gone very strongly into humor. And they're all very good at it. I've done it limitedly.

WIATER: Speaking of humor, you both collaborated on a recent feature, *Loose Cannons*, starring Gene Hackman and Dan Ackroyd. I understand it didn't come out quite the way you



Photo Credit: Beth Guinn

wrote it?

RICHARD: It was a tragedy!

MATHESON: Yeah, a comedy of terrors!

RICHARD: We wrote this screenplay, and promptly sold it. And they brought in a director who completely rewrote the whole thing! I don't think there's anything left of what we wrote, but that's the picture that came out. I remember going to see it, and we both walked out of the screening, saying to ourselves, "Well, it's not the movie we wrote." It's like a non-experience when that happens.

WIATER: You've also recently sold another collaborative screenplay, this time to director Richard Donner, entitled *Shifter*. Can you tell me anything about its present status? Is it also a comedy?

MATHESON: Currently it's meant to be a horror story. I don't think they'll ever make it. I mean, they bought it almost immediately -- everybody loved the script. Then we started having meetings, and one day we walked in -- Richard Donner's wife's production company was going to make it -- and she handed out a little outline which indicated she wanted to do another picture entirely. And this was after we had been working weeks on the script, getting down to the nitty-gritty of details. Neither of us cared to do it again, and after that point she became less interested in our collaboration. It's amazing. In Hollywood, it's like the crest of a wave when a project has its most interest, and if it's made then, then it will get produced. If the interest fades, or the project takes time to develop, then the project somehow becomes an "old" property to them. Even if it's still good. And that's what happened here. And it's a wonderful script, I say modestly.

RICHARD: That's exactly the expe-

rience I've had. My friend Mick Garris and I wrote a screenplay that we sold to Joel Silver. Again, great excitement, and it had all the same earmarks of what we first went through with *Shifter*. And then they brought in John Landis, who's a very prominent director, but not much of a writer. And John undertook rewriting the entire screenplay, and what was a green-lighted picture became a red-lighted picture. And that was the end of the project -- at least for now. So the director has the power to bring ruination to a project. Whenever you see a bad movie you may be looking at the catastrophic result of *one* guy that comes in at the eleventh hour and changes everything.

MATHESON: Early last year, I adapted John Saul's *Creature* for Universal. They were very happy with the entire script. When they decided to make it, they hired a director -- the man who had directed *The Woman In White*. He insisted on rewriting it, and ten months later, handed in a Gothic script. I guess he had turned it into an Edgar Allan Poe story or something. And they don't like his script, so they dropped it. And that's the end of the project, as far as I can see. This sort of thing happens over and over again in this business. And when they turn out badly, usually the writer gets the blame.

RICHARD: There's a mythology about directing. Everyone that you meet thinks they can write. They may not be convinced they can write brilliantly, but they're convinced they can *write*. Not everyone is convinced they can direct. Directing seems to bring out a lot more anxiety because there are technical aspects to it: knowing what lenses do, knowing how to light a scene. When you talk to people about this, it brings up a certain amount of apprehension. So the director has an incredible amount of mythological power, and that is why the system in Hollywood is set

up this way -- and why it's so out of whack. The director is the last person to come in to perceive and render the material. But it's crazy to bring in somebody literally a month before a production begins, who has nothing to do with it, and then have the power to wreck your screenplay, simply because that's the position of power that they're in. But that's the system.

WIATER: Then I would take it that having been a writer, story editor, and producer, you may eventually take the next step to become a director to insure your screenplays won't be rewritten?

RICHARD: That's *exactly* what I'm doing now. The system is pretty much locked in -- you can carp about it and go crazy, but the goal is to become a director as quickly as possible. Saving that, the next best position is to become a "hyphenate," the writer-producer in features. The system in Hollywood is also strange because they are more willing to give the reins to a first-time director -- a twenty-two-year-old kid coming out from USC -- then they are to a person who's studied directing for twenty years, and is completely prepared. Again, it's the hysteria of the town: if you learn how to play the hysteria, you can kind of get your own way. So there's a screenplay I wrote, which I'll also be executive producing, that's the one I'm going to be directing.

WIATER: Richard, it's common knowledge that you haven't been very pleased with the way your screenplays have finally made it to the screen over the years. Yet I understand you were happy with the work a young Steven Spielberg did on your original teleplay for *Duel*?

MATHESON: I'm glad you said "work on," because usually it's referred to as "Steven Spielberg's *Duel*." I'm very fussy -- when I write a script, I see it in my mind; I write it *exactly* as I envision it. And almost never

does it come close at all to my expectations. Occasionally it does, or even exceeds my expectations, as it did in *Duel*, or in *The Night Stalker*, or in *The Morning After*, a movie for television I wrote about alcoholism. And a few others. Then I'm very happy. But in motion pictures, I can't think of a single one that bowled me over right from the start. After a while, you usually forget about your original vision, and you begin to judge the film on its own merits. Then you start to accept it. For a long time, I didn't like *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, but as time went by, I began to see how unusual it was for its period, and how really nicely done it is. So I began to appreciate it more. But that's just the way my mind works.

WIATER: I think our audience would be fascinated by how the actual story "Duel" was inspired.

MATHESON: I was playing golf with Jerry Sohl, who's a science fiction writer who was quite well-known some years ago, and when we were coming in for lunch from the course, people were running about saying that John Kennedy had just been shot. And we went in for lunch, and everybody was talking about it, and we were so distressed we just couldn't think of going back and playing again. So we were driving home through the San Fernando Valley, when a truck began tailgating us through this narrow pass. And *really* tailgating us -- to a point where Jerry had to speed up and pull over to the side of the road, spinning around and raising dust and everything. And on top of Kennedy's assassination, to have this happen, we were like screaming out the window at this guy! But then, being a true writer, as soon as the car came to a halt and the dust came down, I borrowed an envelope off of him and wrote down the story idea. And ten years later, I wrote it.

WIATER: *Hell House* is regarded by many as your finest work of out-and-out horror. You also adapted it



to the screen as *The Legend of Hell House*. Any thoughts on which one you now like the best -- or can best accept?

MATHESON: I was happy with the novel. Ray Russell told me once it was like reading a novel written by three different people, because over the period of ten years that I wrote it I had changed psychologically, and my approach to the novel changed. The movie -- again I was unhappy with it when it came out because I had my own vision of it. At the time, my dream cast was Elizabeth Taylor

and Richard Burton, and Rod Steiger and his wife Claire Bloom, who I thought would have been perfect. It happened to sell and be made just before that type of picture became a big "A" type viable product. *The Exorcist* came out shortly after that film, and that type of project then became a very big production. Too bad I didn't wait. But I like the film now. I'm used to it, and can judge it by its own terms. Then I'm perfectly satisfied.

WIATER: Are there any unproduced screenplays you've written that

you especially regret having never been made?

MATHESON: Oh, I have regrets about a lot of them. Before I did *Creature*, I did an adaptation of Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. And everybody was delighted with it. Then Universal bought Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* -- and that killed *The Lost World*, because they didn't want to do two dinosaur movies. So we've got this great script sitting there on the shelf. 20th Century-Fox bought the rights to my novel *What Dreams May Come*, and I was working on the script: it was all set up to go. Wolfgang Peterson, who did *Das Boot*, was set to direct it. We went to Munich and met with him, and then they changed the executive regime at 20th Century-Fox, and when they do that, the new executives immediately scrap everything the former regime had in the works. So since then, nothing. But there's a complete script of it. A very good one, if I do say so myself.

WIATER: R.C., you've had one other screenplay produced, a cautionary tale about teenagers called *Three O'Clock High*. Were you pleased or displeased with the final results?

RICHARD: That was written during a time when Hollywood was in a state of hysteria for spec scripts. It was like a gold rush town for a while. People were selling scripts for a million dollars plus every week. So this script was written, and in no time at all there was an auction going on between Steven Spielberg, and Aaron Spelling, and United Artists, and Warner Bros. It ultimately went to Spielberg because he assured me that it would not be rewritten. It's very hard to get that assurance. So I was really happy with it. Spielberg's protege from USC, who was about nine-years-old at the time, directed it, and he's gone on to do some very interesting film work.

WIATER: It's difficult enough to collaborate with anyone, period. So

I wonder if it's any easier or in fact more difficult to collaborate since you are father and son? I can readily imagine, R.C., that in spite of you being right on some point, Richard can always say, "Look, I'm your father -- either we do it my way or you can go without supper tonight!"

RICHARD: That's it! [laughs] That's exactly how it works!

MATHESON: Collaborate or starve! [laughs]

RICHARD: I'll tell you, on the face of it, it is the most complicated process in the world. Having worked with Mick Garris, my Dad, and some other people, either you can collaborate -- or you can't. It's almost like a really good conversation with somebody that you've just met. It either falls into place or it doesn't. You think back and say, "How on earth did that happen? We talked about all these personal, complicated subjects, and yet it felt natural and perfect." Or you think about other conversations, and you say, "God, it was just painful to try and get through that." And that's the way it is with collaboration. It is not a perfect process, but either you see things alike, or you do not. I think my Dad and I see things alike.

MATHESON: There has to be a basic *sempatico*, and an intellectual joining, for you to do it in the first place. The easy stage, the fun stage, is putting the story together, when you're just throwing story ideas back and forth and constructing a story. It's when you get to the actual writing that there's liable to be some difference in your approaches, because nobody writes the same way. Nobody hears things the same way in their minds.

WIATER: Both of you have novels coming out later this year. Could you tell me what your readers have to look forward to?

MATHESON: I have sort of an ac-

tion-adventure, foreign intrigue story called *Seven Steps to Midnight*. How it came about was that in 1981 my wife and I, and Richard and his girlfriend at the time, went to Europe. We went to London, Paris, Rome, and Switzerland. And at the time, I thought, "Well, I'm never going to have this kind of background again, so I'm going to start collecting booklets and taking photographs, and keeping notes, just in case I can do a novel from this." So when we got home, I tore off about a couple of hundred pages on the typewriter in a very short period of time, and then put it aside until last year. At which time I thought, "Well, maybe I better finish this now." And that's what it is: just a simple suspense story about a man being pursued, with everyone trying to get him, and what happens afterwards.

RICHARD: I decided to do *Loose Cannons* as a novel: *Loose Cannons*. [laughs] Actually, mine is a paranoid thriller about the television industry called *Created By*. It's about a man who creates the most successful television series that's ever been on the air, and it's also the most violent and sexually candid show that's ever been on the air. And it's about how it impacts on his life. I also have a new collection of short stories coming out, called *Faith*.

WIATER: You've recently had a novel published, *Journal of the Gun Years*, as well as your *Collected Stories* from Dream/Press.

MATHESON: Yes, Dream/Press has since put out this two-volume work, *Somewhere In Time/What Dreams May Come*, which some of you may have seen in the dealer's room. They're also bringing out, I guess this year, a three-volume collection of my earliest suspense novels: *Someone is Bleeding*, *Fury on Sunday*, and *Ride the Nightmare*. And then, later on, I believe they're going to do a collection of my nasty ghost stories, which would be *A Stir of*

Echoes, *Hell House*, and *Earth-bound*.

WIATER: Not to put you on the spot, but who are your favorite writers?

MATHESON: He doesn't do that much anymore, but my favorite fantasy writer for a long time has been Jack Finney.

RICHARD: I like Martin Amis. And J.G. Ballard.

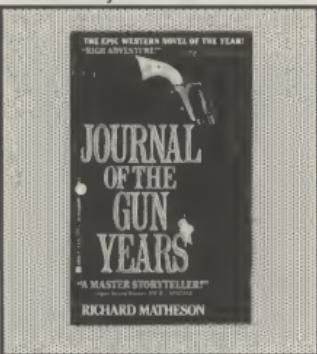
WIATER: Although you've written across a wide range of genres, from suspense to mystery to westerns, it's fairly obvious that, when your times comes to be eulogized by the media, it'll be as "Richard Matheson, popular science fiction writer." Does that still bother you?

MATHESON: Well, I predicted to my wife a long time ago that, when I die, it will say, "Richard Matheson, science fiction writer succumbs . . ." [laughs] To whatever! No, I've never thought of myself as a science fiction writer. As I think I said just yesterday, when I sold my first story, "Born of Man and Woman," I thought of it just as an interesting idea of what would happen if a normal set of parents had a monster for a child. The editors told me it was science fiction. Then I met people in the business who were into science fiction, and I learned there was a big market for it. Suddenly there were like fifty markets for stories. And even though I had never read it in my whole life, I rushed out and borrowed every science fiction anthology I could find. And just crammed it all into my mind. I then came up with the usual derivative-type stories, but then little by little changed and expanded those ideas.

I think "science fiction" is too limited a term. The only article I've ever written, for *Writer's Digest* [April 1956], was called "Science Fiction Unlimited." In it I expounded on the idea that in fantasy, *anything* goes.

But science fiction has strict rules. It's an extrapolation on something that already exists in our times, and it doesn't have to be about rocket ships or space travel. One of the best science fiction stories I think I ever wrote was called "The Test." It was based on the idea that, in the future, the population would get so large that they wouldn't let old people live on, indefinitely. That at a certain age, say sixty, they would have to start taking tests. And if the old people didn't pass the tests, they would be put in a gas chamber or something similar. And this is a story about a young man helping his father, who is like seventy-years-old, try to pass the test. Now to me that's perfect science fiction, because it's an extrapolation of a condition which exists with us today and it's not so far-fetched that it's out of the realm of possibility.

WIATER: The degree of "every-day realism" in your fantastic fiction has



always been one of your trademarks. To a certain degree, you've based your characters and settings on your personal life and surroundings, haven't you?

MATHESON: A few of the ideas. First, before I got married, the protagonist was usually a single guy. When I got married, the protagonist usually had a wife. When we had children, the protagonist usually had a wife and two or more children. The

environment for *I Am Legend* was a house in the neighborhood that we lived in; the environment for *A Stir of Echoes* was the house we lived in; the cellar for *The Shrinking Man* was the cellar below the house we were staying in on Long Island. It's much easier to do that than to try and create something out of whole cloth.

When I first started *Hell House*, I had difficulty describing the house because I didn't know what to describe; I had nothing in mind. When we went on a family trip to the Hearst Castle, I thought, "This looks just about right." So I got a book there with photographs of all the rooms that I could use to describe in my novel. But certainly, it's always about family to the point where most of my female characters were named "Ruth" in my stories. The children were even named after the names of my children. And the novel *What Dreams May Come* is an exact reflection of my family's names, backgrounds -- everything.

RICHARD: In all my television work, there was always this odd man with a beard. Standing in the shadows. Just there . . .

WIATER: R.C., looking way into the future, do you think eventually you may be best known as a screenwriter, rather than as a writer of novels or short stories? Nowadays, everyone has a burgeoning "video library" as well as the traditional library of books and magazines.

RICHARD: I just want to dance. [laughs] It's hard to say, because I'll know a lot more about this when my novel comes out. If people are drawn to it, and respond to it, then I can see myself putting a lot more energy into my book writing. And the same is true with my career in features. So I'm going to wait and see.

MATHESON: I'd like to say that Richard's future in prose is very, very much definite, because the novel is really brilliantly written. — CD



EDWARD BRYANT

BOOK REVIEWS

As we move into the first few months of the 500-year Columbiad, I'd like to pause just a moment to remind you of a few of the books you should have read last year. If you missed them, it's still not too late, though in a few cases, you may have to hit a used bookstore. The year's most memorable science fiction novel for me was Bradley Denton's *Buddy Holly is Alive and Well on Ganymede* (Morrow). This funny and wise saga of aliens screwing around with human culture, rock 'n' roll, and a millennial search for identity, is a fine novel that transcends any genre labels. The cyborg Doberman is alone worth the price of admission. In terms of the unclassifiable, Karen Joy Fowler's *Sarah Canary* (Holt) is an astonishing historical literary fantasy about an enigmatic woman's odyssey through the 19th-century Pacific Northwest. In terms of anthologies on beyond the well-known Dozois and Windling/Datlow annual compilations, the reprint collection to have is *The Best of Pulphouse* (St. Martin's) edited by Kristine Kathryn Rusch. These varied tales drawn from the dozen volumes of the hardback anthology demonstrate what's happening on the dangerous edge of short fiction. In fantasy, you should have caught Robert McCammon's *Boy's Life* (Pocket). Don't let preju-

dices about best-selling writers block your vision. *Boy's Life* is a dazzling magic realist portrait of the American South. Here are two paperback originals you should seek out now, if you haven't already. They are fragile and have no hardback editions to preserve them. Kathe Koja's *The Cypher* (Dell) is the well-known debut offering of Jeanne Cavelos's Abyss horror line. It's tough, gritty, sharp-edged, and -- yes -- horrifying. An instant classic. And do not neglect S.P. Somtow's *Riverrun* (Avon). This is the first volume of what will presumably be an epic fantasy meganovel; but just in itself, it is a brilliant, elegant tapestry of wonders. Finally, secure a copy of Nick Bantock's *Griffin & Sabine* (Chronicle). It at first looks a bit like a picture book for kids. It's not. *Griffin & Sabine* is a fusion of art and fiction in a romantic fantasy for adults.

This is not all the cream floating at the top of 1991's bucket, but it's the barest minimum you should skim off to read if you've simply been too busy with other pursuits than slogging through thousands of new books in sf, fantasy, and horror.

Finally, who should you be looking for? The gaps between new generations of hot writers increasingly narrow. Clive Barker begat Dan Simmons who begat Kathe Koja

who begat Poppy Z. Brite. Brite's big splash will come this autumn with the Dell hardback publication of her first novel, *Lost Souls*. And already . . . Brite has begat Norman Partridge, who hasn't even finished a novel. But Partridge's short fiction has already attracted the attention of both eager editors and a growing audience. And who lurks on beyond Norman Partridge? I have some guesses, but also some discretion. I'll be cautious for now and unveil my predictions when the time is right. Now. Let's get back to the books you can pick up and read here in the present.

If there's a harder, tougher novel about love, commitment, obsession, and talent lurking out there on the horizon, I'm not sure I could survive reading it. Kathe Koja's second novel, *Bad Brains* (Dell Abyss, \$4.50, 367pp), is a red-hot wire sliding just behind the reader's eye and deep into the old temporal lobe. There's no sophomore slump here. *The Cypher* has a worthy successor.

Koja continues to be the touchstone for Dell's often innovative Abyss line of horror books, and that's not an easy achievement. *Bad Brains* is a potential cross-over work that's both a certifiable horror novel of the supernatural, and an all too terrify-

ingly realistic portrait of a man's grappling with all the permutations of sanity after he's brain-injured.

Austen Bandy is an unsuccessful artist making his rent by managing a marginal T-shirt shop somewhere in the chilly wilderness of urban New Jersey. Austen's still hard for his ex-wife Emily, who left in disgust a long while before. Austen's failure as a portrait artist seems to be linked to his inability to depict his clients in any way *they* consider realistic.

Then his gallery-owner friend Peter invites him to a party. Austen stops at a store to pick up a twelve-pack of Bud, only to fall over a four-inch curb and smack his head into pavement. Hard. Austen wakes up in hospital, in pain, and cognizant that he cannot understand the words coming from the nurse's mouth. The language dysfunction eventually goes away, but other symptoms remain. Seizures. The feeling that *something* wants to make him a vessel. Creepily disorienting and nearly indescribable encounters with something silvery, mercurially mutable, and inutterably sinister that lurks in the corners of his room and his eye.

Austen is immersed in the helpless nightmare world of hospitals, doctors, strong medications, and no answers to his questions. This is realistic horror and it communicates a queasy terror to anyone who's ever been confined to hospital with something serious, who's been frustrated by doctors' inability to be God, or who's had anything to do with neurological problems or brain injuries.

Austen covers it succinctly when he thinks about the silver thing and the rest of his problems:

"I am so tired of seeing it.

"I am so tired of being sick.

"I am so afraid of being crazy."

He knows the rollercoaster terror of riding on huge doses of Tegretol, Demerol, and other drugs. He knows the horror of blacking out and waking up without knowing where he's been, what he's done, or how long it all took. Austen is a man spinning out of control, and loss of

control is one of the staples of both literary and real-life horror. Koja captures all this with a suggestive accuracy that is profoundly disturbing.

After discovering that everything is *not* going to be all right, Austen sets out on a cross-country odyssey to visit the two women who have counted in his life. He finds his mother Cyndee in Wichita Falls, Texas. He also runs into and befriends Russell, a drifter who perceives Austen as a genuine seer. Together, the two men travel to Michigan and locate Emily, the woman Austen still heartbreakingly loves. In Detroit, he also finds the mysterious Dr. Quiet, a gentleman who may be New Age quack, a bit of a *voudour* priest, or perhaps someone who has sufficient, if only partial, true vision, to perceive Austen for what he really is.



The novel is structured something like the funnel web of a hunting spider, with the inhabitant crouched waiting down at the bottom. Traversing the web turns into a tighter and more claustrophobic spiral as Austen nears the end of his journey. And the silver thing is always there, as half-seen, as barely understood, as disorienting and frightening as the fantasy in a fever dream.

I won't disclose the ending. Suffice it to say that Austen is obliged to adapt to a new reality; more, he

must commit himself to his talent and his art in ways which he'd never dreamed he was capable. But is he a mount ridden by voodoo gods? Is he a jar filled with demonic possessors? Is Austen a man pushed by a rewired brain into an inconceivable sector of madness? Is he simply a genuine artist receiving a profound lesson in aesthetic commitment?

Bad Brains is a rewarding and perhaps sobering experience for any creative person who has ever questioned his or her own grasp on the nature of talent and reality. In this novel, Kathe Koja's managed to rewire the volume knob so that it goes up another complete gradation in intensity.

K.W. Jeter's new novel, the palindromic *Wolf Flow* (St. Martin's, \$18.95, 288pp), is the sort of tonic that keeps me reading horror fiction. It's tough, spare, and uncompromising, a *noir* suspense book for the '90s. I get impatient with so much commercial dreck in which the human capacity for evil gets freed from the hook when the author pins all moral culpability on the supernatural and on big-E Evil. No problem with using the supernatural as a metaphorical reflecting mirror, but as an assumption of all blame for our nightmares? Sorry, no. The devil that makes us do it is the possessing devil resident in all our skulls.

That's just my opinion, of course; but it does betray a bit of my metaphysics. Anyhow, in *Wolf Flow*, K.W. Jeter neatly and convincingly balances the beam scale of just who or what is responsible for which atrocity or benign deed. The book starts cinematically when a bound, beaten man is tossed out of a car going fifty on a remote Eastern Oregon road. The victim survives . . . barely. His name is Mike and he's a young medical resident who's been making a tidy living ripping off and selling drugs from his hospital. Trouble is, he's irritated Aitch, a major Portland dealer. Aitch and his underling Charlie make an example of Mike.

Aitch is the sort of dubious personality type who gets a kick out of shooting a Polaroid of Mike's body after the guy's been shoved out of the speeding car.

But Mike tenaciously hangs on long enough to be found by a trucker who has good reason not to appear too obvious a samaritan. Mike ends up seeking refuge and recuperation in Thermalene, a long-abandoned spa. But the waters in Thermalene are special. They enable Mike miraculously to regain his health. They also have an agenda of their own; in this desolate place, there really is no such thing as a free lunch.

Mike finds himself in the care of the trucker's teen-aged son, Doot. Doot's recently graduated from small-town high school and has no particular place to go. Aside from native intelligence and a natural decency, what Doot's got going for him is his long friendship with his classmate Annie. Annie's one of Jeter's most appealing characters, one of those " . . . girls who didn't wear makeup and had their hair cropped shaggy-short instead of in one of those big stiff, tangled fluffs. And who played tympani in the school orchestra, and got B's and A's -- at least when she wasn't telling the English teacher to go fuck herself for calling Emily Dickinson a man-hating spinster." One of Jeter's great gifts is for evoking distinct, familiar characters, sometimes the sort you'd like to meet a minute from now, sometimes the sort you wouldn't hesitate to plug with a .38.

When he isn't depicting some of the grossest clinically described medical horror since Michael Blumlein published *The Brains of Rats*, Jeter's merging a crackerjack topical chase melodrama (dealer Aitch really doesn't like corrupted doc Mike much) with an affecting coming-of-age account (as Doot learns that, if he lives long enough, and can resist the blandishments of the darkest desires, he really might have a future).

Along with the nicely deline-

ated characters, Jeter's got a real asset going in his landscape. In *Wolf Flow*, the big city is Portland, Oregon. The boondocks are the high desert of eastern Oregon. These are wonderful landscapes not familiar to most readers. The desolation around Thermalene is both a physical and psychological moonscape that could suck your soul dry in about the time it takes to say, "Gee, maybe one censensy little moral compromise wouldn't be so bad."

K.W. Jeter's an increasingly important writer and *Wolf Flow* is one of his strongest novels.

Melanie Tem's second published novel (in writing, it precedes her Abyss debut, *Prodigal*) is the prose equivalent of a low-budget but lovingly crafted movie. *Blood Moon* (Women's Press, Price not announced, 170pp) is short and compact, with a limited cast of characters and a plot that is more frequently alluded to than actually spelled out. *Blood Moon* is also a nearly perfect exercise in dark ambiguity: is it truly a tale of the supernormal, or is it an off-center account of disturbed psychology? Either way, Tem knows what she's doing; the book delivers, though probably not in ways most readers will foresee.

Blood Moon appears to be centered around the empowerment (though not always for the better) of the elderly, the young, and women. Breanne Novak is an investment counselor ready, she thinks, for single motherhood. To this end, she initiates adoption proceedings for a troubled pre-adolescent boy named Greg. Greg, who's bounced around from one foster family to another, is a boy driven by a terrible anger. Part of Greg's psychological survival kit is his belief that he can *do* things with his anger. Much like King's Carrie, Greg believes he can break things, hurt people, wreak destruction, all with the power of his mind. Or, author Tem is scrupulous to point out, Greg's psychic manifestations are all just accidents, coincidences,

or redefinitions transformed by wishful thinking.

Breanne has a prickly relationship with her 74-year-old recently widowed father, Andy. Andy is also a creature of intense anger. When a minor stroke leaves Andy with an aphasic condition that severely limits his ability to articulate speech, Greg believes he is responsible. More complications come when Breanne's one-night fling with an old friend leaves her pregnant. She almost loses the baby in a harrowing scene of blood and darkness. Never mind supernatural implications. The level of real-world horror is high. Midway through *Blood Moon*, Breanne dumps on her social worker friend: "I'm pregnant. Nine weeks pregnant. And I'm bleeding and I have terrible cramps and they won't know for three days to a week whether I've miscarried or the baby's dead *in utero*. And my father's had a stroke, and Greg chose *this* weekend to run away. *This* weekend. He *knew*, goddamn him, he *knew*." Sound like soap opera? Only superficially. This is real life at the disturbing level it so frequently is for most of humanity.

The issue of magical thinking, the supernormal power implicit in the naming of things, is the element that focuses *Blood Moon*'s portrayal of humanity. The author ultimately balances that so adroitly on the razor edge of realism, only the hardest reader will remain untouched.

Love, violence, new life, the death of old personality, these are the raw materials of human existence and good fiction. Melanie Tem probably could have spent twice or three times as much time and space elaborating her themes. But she didn't. She told her story, made her point, and got out. You'll find it worth your while to track down this British edition.

You might think it the height of East Texas chutzpah for the editor of an original anthology to lead off the book with his very own novella. Not when the editor is Joe R.

Lansdale, and the publisher doubtless was holding his minor children hostage. *Dark at Heart* (Dark Harvest, \$21.95, 350pp) is the exceptional case where the gambit is not pretentious; it's absolutely required. *Dark at Heart* is intended to be a cutting-edge showcase for dark suspense stories; and since Lansdale is about the best-case scenario for a dark suspense writer, well, what's a publisher or an appropriate anthology to do?

Over the past few years, Dark Harvest has grown in stature and productivity as a first-line genre publisher. Along with an excellent selection of novels and single-author collections, Paul Mikol and Scot Stadalsky have published such crackerjack anthologies as *Silver Scream*, *Razor Saddles*, *Stalkers*, *Obsessions*, and the annual *Night Visions* series. Now the guys from Chicago want to expand into so-called dark suspense, another new label looking for a marketing niche in the '90s. So what is dark suspense? Theoretically it's a loose terra incognita where readers fatigued with loud and quiet horror, splatterpunk, and tired detective story retreats can find tough, stimulating new company. Thomas Harris and *Silence of the Lambs* would probably be a good example. I don't know if this warrants a whole new genre category, but I admire the intent. In musical terms, it's time for fusion.

Dark at Heart is actually co-edited by both Karen Lansdale and Joe R. There's a score of new stories, some long, some very short, some grim, a few quite funny. There are contributions from novices and old hands, from names familiar in the mystery field, in horror, in both. In short, there's the vital kind of variety familiar to readers of Lansdale's other anthologies. Fusion.

Lansdale's contribution is called "The Events Concerning a Nude Fold-Out Found in a Harlequin Romance" and it takes place in the mythical East Texas town of Mud Creek, a location immortalized in

the author's fantasy novel, *The Magic Wagon*. Poor Plebin Cook is an honest, hard-working joe who's just been laid off from his job at the aluminum chair plant. He's got a teen-aged daughter named Jasmine who's a little hipper than Nancy Drew, and an ex-wife who keeps a grudge. Father and daughter become involved with Martha, the not-so-soft-and-cuddly proprietor of the local paperback bookstore after Cook finds a centerfold marked in the manner of slaughtering a beef tucked into a Harlequin romance. Martha, being the suspicious type, immediately jumps to the conclusion that the book's seller, a dubious circus dog-trainer named Waldo the Great, is the serial killer who's been preying on the region. Cook's dubious, but the women decide to do some detecting. What ensues is funny, colorful, occasionally scary, and always amusing. As ever, Lansdale's strong suit is his people; they breathe, belch, and bleed right there on the page. Interestingly, the least evoked character is the killer. He's just sort of presented as a natural verity, like the weather. At any rate, Lansdale's novella is worth the price of admission.

But just to sweeten the pot, all the rest of the stories are worth the reading, and most are worth paying for. F. Paul Wilson's "The Long Way Home" is another Repairman Jack story, a tale of that pre-Equalizer wrong-righted pragmatist. This time Jack manages to let a little human decency trap him in a hostage situation with cop-killers that might jeopardize his whole clandestine existence. It's about as hard-nosed as a black rhino. Neal Barrett, Jr.'s "Hit" is hypnotic confection about a hitman who discovers that the only downside to his business is the clients . . .

"Treatment" by Andrew Vachas is a short, sharp, wish-fulfillment fantasy about what to do with child abusers. Lewis Shiner's "Dirty Work" has a likeable protagonist similar to, and slightly more competent at dealing with contemporary times, than Lansdale's hero. Shiner's

nameless protagonist is a married family man who is hired by an old schoolmate to do some surveillance legwork. The job turns out to be ever less palatable as our intelligent blue-collar narrator finds himself enmeshed ever deeper in a tangled web of rape and jurisprudence. All told, it's a tense, complex account of moral quicksand, the tone being spoiled only by one scene in which a tough woman armed with a silencer-equipped revolver gets the drop on our hero. Not likely. A silencer on a revolver, that is.

New hot writer Norman Partridge's "Dead Celebs" is a mordant examination of twisted happenings in L.A. graveyards, conservative Hollywood parties, and the extreme nature of collectors' minds. Steve Rasnic Tem's "Rat Catcher" will not be the most pleasant story for readers edgy about pink eyes, chisel teeth, and scrabbling little claws. Robert Petitt's "I'll Always Love You" is contrived beyond belief, yet gets by on the same nonstop high energy level as the old EC Comics.

"Mushrooms" by Chet Williamson is your basic blind-folks-trapped-on-a-subway-car-in-the-middle-of-a-black-gang-crossfire story. It's tense. Thomas Sullivan's "Deep Down Under" is a very off-center little gem about the few survivors trapped in a crashed airliner high in the Andes and buried under a hundred feet of snow. What a claustrophobe's delight! And what a neatly worked ray of light at the end.

The anthology is bookended by David Morrell's novella, "The Shrine," a deeply felt, very humane fantasy about a rural spot where the ghosts go. Morrell explores what the ghosts mean to the protagonist, a small town police chief who has lost his wife and child in a car crash. Ultimately the story is a lady-or-the-tiger choice between the rational and the irrational which, philosophically, is probably the only fair way to go. At any rate, for all its rational fairness, the story is invested with an immense amount of feeling by the author.

The other stories aren't slouches either, but you'll just have to take my word for that. The Lansdales have assembled a first-rate anthology that crosses boundaries and will entertain several different constituencies. Neat trick. One hopes it will be the first of many more.

Courting Disasters (Wildside Press, \$35, 220pp) is Nina Kiriki Hoffman's second book, second collection, and a more telling compilation of her work than her Pulphouse collection, *Legacy of Fire*. Here are nineteen stories reprinted from such periodicals large and small as *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories*, *Grue* and *Dragon*. There is one story original to this volume, along with a per-sonable introduction by Kristine Kathryn Rusch.

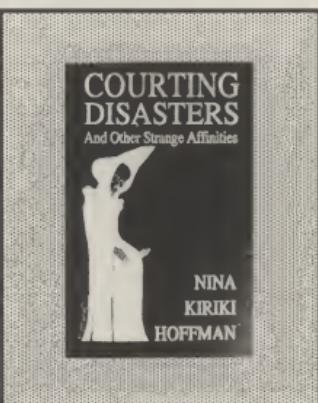
Courting Disasters is also one of the most substantial, satisfying, and altogether attractive offerings from John Betancourt's specialty imprint, Wildside Press. The book is bound without a jacket in black boards with silver stamping. The cover illustration is an embossed figure of Death by Gahan Wilson. Although all too susceptible to rubbing, the silver-and-black production is visually wonderful.

Now back to the contents. The nifty thing about Hoffman's fiction is that her view of the world, along with her perception of everything that lives in the world, is highly individualized. Her writing voice has a distinctive timbre just as does that of Howard Waldrup or Avram Davidson or R.A. Lafferty. We're talking here about fresh eyes and a brain skewed so as to perceive life's magic and the world's weirdness from new angles -- and those angles are vastly more acute than obtuse.

Some examples: "Voices in a Shelter Home" is about a male artist and a female model, and the spectral voices heard in a huge old house that once served as a shelter home for battered women. The ghosts are the cries of the women who once lived

there, among whom was the model. The more than metaphorical question is whether the male artist can hear and understand the voices, and whether he can translate them into art that others can comprehend. In "Waiting for the Hunger," a shrink tries to work with a female vampire patient. Bingeing is a problem ... So is the nature of the patient/doctor relationship.

"The Open Air My Grave" is about a woman who may be a silkie trapped forever on land as an inlander's wife, or she may be a looney-tune child killer. It's a wonderfully ambiguous contemporary story carrying a timeless fairy tale quality with it. That's one of Hoffman's terrific achievements -- the ability to imbue topical tales with the broader, deeper resonance of myth.



In "Variations on a Scream," nine-year-old Nicola is kidnapped by Satanists bent on human sacrifice. What happens there is more a psychic version of "The Ransom of Redchief" than expectable horror. It's an oblique take on an otherwise straightforward story. "Housewife" is something of a sexier, grimmer version of one of those Robert Sheckley satires in which household appliances interact all too intimately with humans. You might call this one a case of domestic infatuation. "Little Once" packs in brief prose the impact of

one of Gahan Wilson or Edward Gorey's darker cartoons. It's about a woman who pays an old lady to take away an unwanted child, but who doesn't obey certain cautions.

"Exact Change" enchanting. It's about a passel of country kids with magical powers who confront the armed hijacker of a school bus. Somehow it manages to compress a complete history of adolescent passage into a few pages. "Courting Disasters" sets up a webwork of human relationships in which a not-terribly-likable car crash victim is haunted by the spirits of both his car and the redwood with which they collided. It's spooky, kooky, and a little ooky ... And maybe there's a point there. I suspect Nina Hoffman's books might actually be the sort of works a contemporary Addams Family would read and enjoy. Her stories combine a difficult blending of the magical, the grim, the funny, and the affecting.

Sometimes the tales are a little out of balance, occasionally without a sense of weaving together in anything conclusive at the end. But mostly, these stories invoke spells like few other fantasists I could name. All are quirky roadsigns along dusty rural traces and peculiar urban switchbacks, all indicators that this writer is evolving a major career.

Another writer who is developing well is Nancy A. Collins. Her debut, *Sunglasses After Dark*, benefitted from a terrific white-on-white Mel Odum cover with no typography, an intriguing title, and a rock 'n' roll intensity. Her second novel, *Tempter*, was something of a plateau work, adding little to what she had accomplished in her initial novel. Now her third book, *In the Blood* (Roc, \$4.99 301pp), disappoints not at all. It's a discerning crowd-pleaser.

With her vampire books, Collins displays and employs a keen commercial sense. When I say *commercial*, I mean no insult at all. This is crowd-satisfying storytelling with color, movement, excitement, some

erotic content, and just enough adroitly twisted violence to keep the more jaded readers bright-eyed enthralled without making more conservative fans puke in their Maalox. Collins is developing a hip romantic style that keeps a honed edge of sardonic humor. It's a killer combination.

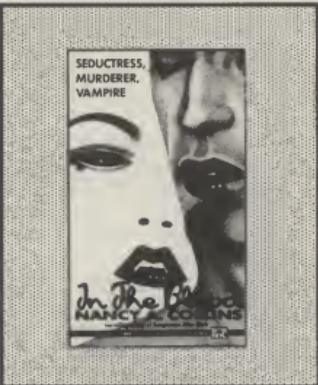
The events of *In the Blood* follow a few years after those of *Sunglasses After Dark*. One of Collins' technical achievements is to backfill the new or forgetful reader fully, quickly, and unobtrusively. We get a quick reminder that this world is full of Pretenders, those supernatural creatures who can feign humanity: vampires, werewolves, ogres, seraphim, skin dancers, etc. It really is a violent jungle, and humans are the primary prey.

Sonya Blue, the anomalous vampire who skipped the undead state and went right to blood-sucking from being a young woman raped by the evil nosferatu, Lord Morgan, is still looking to destroy her nemesis. But she's invisible at the beginning of the novel. The reader first meets Palmer, a down-at-the-heels PI who has been both wounded grievously by a true femme fatale, and who has wound up railroaded into prison to boot. Palmer gets sprung by one Dr. Pangloss, an enigmatic fellow who wishes to hire him to locate Sonya Blue.

Collins' literary transmission just keeps on shifting into higher gears. Palmer finds Sonya, but is hip enough to know there's something fishy about this detective assignment. He winds up involved in a prickly friendship with our drop-dead attractive heroine. New tangles develop in the plot. There's the sinister plan to genetically engineer a new, improved breed of vampire. There's the climactic trail leading to Ghost Trap, an elaborated take on California's Winchester Mystery House. And what are all those seraphim doing dressed as street people?

It's all a hell of a lot of fun, diminished only slightly by this novel's transparent and unashamed nature

as an interim volume in a continuing series. But what the heck, another Sonya Blue book in, oh, another year or two? We can hope. There is, however, a slight irritation factor in this novel. There are ever more frequent rumors that novels are no longer edited, but the effect is rarely so apparent as here. It wasn't so much the selection of silly typos: *spec-*



trums as a plural? It was more the feeling that *In the Blood* takes place in a peculiar alternate universe, a world where *Barbar* is the King of the Elephants, the *Marinara* Trench lies out there in the Pacific, and *Sam Keane* painted all those terrifying big-eyed waif pictures of the '60s. Yes, the author is supposed to catch such muffed references. But she, as do all of us, has a lot to keep track of. And astute copy editors are supposed to take up the slack. So am I merely carping? Well, not every reader is completely uncritical. No writer wants the magical spell of her or his new literary child broken by the unseemly laughter of that critical reader making too long a list of dumb mistakes and consequently being jerked out of the story every time a new one surfaces. Care costs so little.

But having said that, I still can conscientiously say that I recommend this book both as a keeper for your own shelf, and a cool present for friends unsure about sampling dark

fantasy. Collins has a real affection for her characters and that energy bleeds through. Nancy Collins' new novel sinks its fangs into the reader and actually oxygenates the blood.

Dean R. Koontz is one of the pantheon of the zillion-sellers and I know full well you'll buy his new novel (or not) whether I recommend it (or not). But that's hardly going to stop me from expressing an opinion. *Hideaway* (Putnam, \$22.95, 384pp) is the new book and, like the Collins novel, it's an admirable and thoroughly effective piece of entertainment.

The author has spent many years and many novels refining his approach to broad-based, cross-genre, commercial fiction. *Hideaway* boasts a remarkable increase in effect over Koontz's last few books. It's both a taut serial killer thriller and a surprising occult fantasy.

If *Hideaway* has any low point, it's right at the beginning when Koontz's married protagonists, Hatch and Lindsey Harrison, ride their Honda over a cliff on the way home from Big Bear Lake. The Harrisons are a sad and troubled couple, still reeling from the leukemia death of their young son, years before. Their lives change forever when their car splashes into the icy river far below. Hatch's life changes particularly, since he drowns. He's dead, defunct, extinct, finito. The only problem is, this scene seems to take forever. It's told in slow motion, much like the famous and much-reprinted *Reader's Digest* cautionary car crash article of yesteryear: ".035 seconds. As the driver's body is impelled forward, the steering column begins to crush his chest. .042 seconds . . ." Koontz isn't nearly so clinical, but the progression is about as painstaking. But then the pace picks up -- and never slows down for the duration of the novel. Rescuers rush Lindsey and her clinically dead husband to a hospital where a team trained in the new field of resuscitation medicine manages to retrieve the man from

the dead. This is all well-researched and fascinating.

But recall that this is a thriller. No happy endings, at least not in the first few score pages. Now the reader encounters a second story track: there is a young man who has assumed the name Vassago, the appellation of one of Satan's lieutenants. Vassago's been roaming around Orange County, picking up and killing young women and a few men, and then arranging the bodies in grotesque displays he's placed in his hideaway located deep under a bankrupt and abandoned southern California amusement park. Koontz's depiction of Vassago is chilling and convincing.

In the meantime, Hatch and Lindsey have tried to resume their normal lives, but obviously things are not the same. Hatch's emotional malaise is broken. Lindsey and he start the process of adopting a finely

intelligent, if occasionally challenging, physically handicapped girl. Complications for Hatch arise when he finds he's in some sort of a psychic link with Vassago -- and each man is aware of the other's existence. At first unbelieving, Hatch "sees" some of Vassago's atrocities. And through Hatch's eyes, Vassago discovers the existence of first Lindsey, and then the new daughter, Regina. He is strangely attracted to the woman and the girl. He decides he wants them for his museum.

Koontz poses some intriguing questions as the stalking increases and the killings proliferate. What really is the nature of the psychic relationship between Hatch and Vassago? What truly happened to Hatch on the other side of his temporary death? Did some horrendous presence hitchhike back with him? And what or who created the young

killer calling himself Vassago?

Koontz makes sure as a clever storyteller that nothing is ever as obvious as it might at first seem. He springs more than a few surprises, especially at the end, but nothing that wasn't planted fairly and earlier.

Putnam is publishing close to four hundred thousand copies of this hardback in its first printing. But just because it's surely bestseller-bound doesn't mean that it has to be cheap, exploitative, cynically manipulative, or leave a sour taste after you've read it. *Hideaway* is a good example of honest value in entertaining storytelling. It does exactly what it sets out to do and does it well.

SATISFY YOUR THIRST FOR HORROR!!

★ *Dark Destiny Books* ★

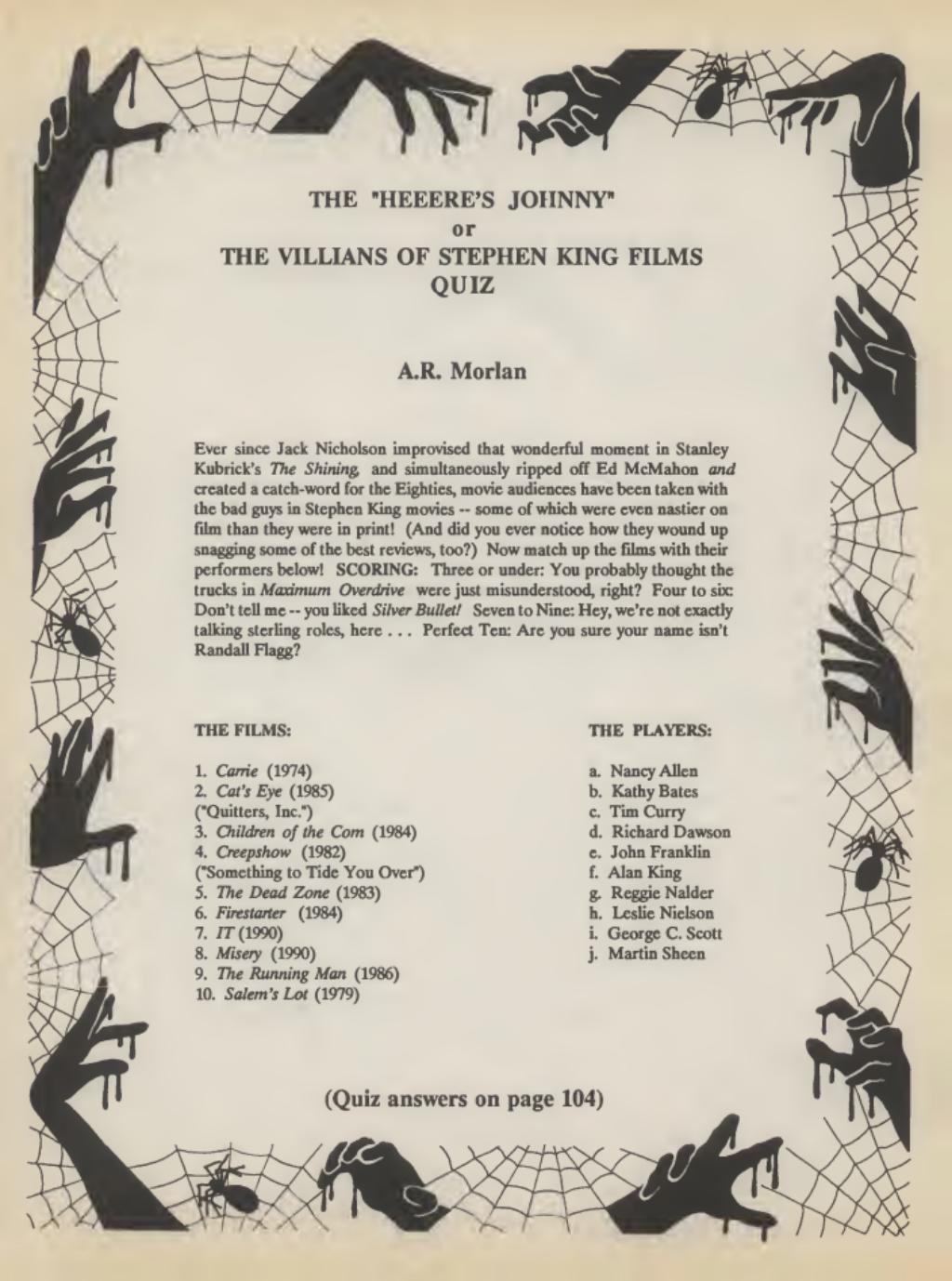
Out-of-print and Current Releases, First Editions, Limited Editions, Signed Editions, and Rare, Hard-to-find Hardbacks and Paperbacks. Genre magazines also available.

Catalog \$1.00—credited on 1st order

Call (915) 468-3381 or write:

Dark Destiny Books ★ P.O. Box 535 ★ Dept. C ★ Miles, Texas 768671





THE "HEEERE'S JOHNNY" or THE VILLIANS OF STEPHEN KING FILMS QUIZ

A.R. Morlan

Ever since Jack Nicholson improvised that wonderful moment in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, and simultaneously ripped off Ed McMahon and created a catch-word for the Eighties, movie audiences have been taken with the bad guys in Stephen King movies -- some of which were even nastier on film than they were in print! (And did you ever notice how they wound up snagging some of the best reviews, too?) Now match up the films with their performers below! SCORING: Three or under: You probably thought the trucks in *Maximum Overdrive* were just misunderstood, right? Four to six: Don't tell me -- you liked *Silver Bullet!* Seven to Nine: Hey, we're not exactly talking sterling roles, here . . . Perfect Ten: Are you sure your name isn't Randall Flagg?

THE FILMS:

1. *Carrie* (1974)
2. *Cat's Eye* (1985)
("Quitters, Inc.")
3. *Children of the Corn* (1984)
4. *Creepshow* (1982)
("Something to Tide You Over")
5. *The Dead Zone* (1983)
6. *Firestarter* (1984)
7. *IT* (1990)
8. *Misery* (1990)
9. *The Running Man* (1986)
10. *Salem's Lot* (1979)

THE PLAYERS:

- a. Nancy Allen
- b. Kathy Bates
- c. Tim Curry
- d. Richard Dawson
- e. John Franklin
- f. Alan King
- g. Reggie Nalder
- h. Leslie Nielson
- i. George C. Scott
- j. Martin Sheen

(Quiz answers on page 104)



JOE R. LANSDALE & DAVID E. WEBB

TRASH THEATRE

THE HUMAN TORNADO

Length: (Uncertain, as our copy contains trailers for the movie and we were laughing so hard at them and the movie, we couldn't keep up with the time. In one sense, this baby is much too short, and in another, phenomenally too long.)

This motherfucker stars:

Rudy Ray Moore as "Dolomite"

Lady Reed as "Queen Bee"

Jimmy Lynch as "Mr. Motion"

And Introducing, and most likely, Exiting: "Java"

Screenplay: Jerry Jones, from the character, Dolomite, created by Rudy Ray Moore.

Directed: Cliff Roquemore.

Winner of the Webb-Lansdale Prize For Excessive Cussing and Overuse of the Word Motherfucker. We're also very proud of our copy of the movie, as it has Spanish subtitles. It's kind of uptown to have this version, don't you think? One particular episode cheers us. In this one, Rudy Ray Moore, decked out in cliché pimp attire, sitting in the back-seat of a car being pursued by red-neck crackers, yells to his driver a rare sentence not containing the word motherfucker, and it goes like this: "Drive, nigger! Drive!" while below, in Spanish subtitles is written in calm

diction: "Acelera, Negro." This translates close to: "Go fast, black person."

Kind of takes away a little, don't you think?

Listen up, motherfuckers. *The Human Tornado* its ownself, is generally reviewed by others as an intentional parody of black exploitation films. But we here at the throbbing nerve center of *Trash Theater* ain't so sure that's what this really is. The word "intentional" may be rationalization. For us, it sends mixed signals. We get the feeling, though a sense of humor is involved here, that this is actually nothing more than a black exploitation movie made by true believers.

Kind of movie where the ignorant white is satisfied that blacks fit all their clichés, and certain blacks are satisfied they fit all the clichés -- big dicks, sexual and physical prowess, a constant one-upmanship on whitey -- and White Liberals faint while Progressive Blacks contemplate suicide, feeling stuff like this sets the black race back fifty years per viewing, and we at *Trash Theater* figure it's just another one of those cultural time capsules that assures us mankind, (peoplekind for the politically correct) black, white, orange or polka-dot, is basically, pretty stupid.

In other words, this ain't a

movie that'll play at the next Ku Klux Klan smoker, but neither can we imagine it being ran on late night TV during Black Pride Week, say sandwiched between commercials for the Negro College Fund.

This baby came on, we knew we were in trouble the minute we saw the credits. They were obviously designed by the same guy who paints those runny grocery store sale notices and banners on butcher paper. You know, you see them in the windows when you go to shop. Stuff like: GROUND BEEF, 2.59 a pound. You see these signs and banners in everything from a Mom and Pop store to Krogers, and it's got to be the same guy goes around and paints these. They all look alike. Have the same lettering and the same tempa paint.

Moments after the Title Credits, the star of stars, Rudy Ray Moore, "Dolomite", motherfuckers, appears on screen wearing a cape that is a grocery store banner, complete with wind holes. He turns his back to the audience, and painted across the banner is the announcement that he's none other than Rudy Ray Moore, his ownself, starring as Dolomite.

That's right, motherfuckers, Dolomite, quintessential Bon Vivant, socialite sophisticate, Boss Stud, Sex Machine, Peckerwood Slammer, White Trash Masher, Super Cracker

Killer, Disco Detective, Ace of Spades and Head Nigger.

Before you hoist your politically correct bullshit banner, start writing in to *Cemetery Dance* to talk about those awful reviewers Lansdale and Webb using the dread N word, see the movie, motherfuckers. The word nigger flows freely in this one, from the mouths of black characters as a kind of left-handed endearment, and from the mouths of white trash villians as something less than endearing. (What we really love about the White Trash Villians is the blacks get their deserved licks in by making the whites ivory versions of Steppin' Fetchit and Amos and Andy, only a little less bright.)

Rudy Ray Moore is a comedian. Or claims to be. He used to make racy party records like Red Foxx, back in the early sixties. He never runs out of breath or finds a sentence in which motherfucker can't be worked into the context, and he ain't the kind of fella wastes film. The first of the movie hasn't got a damn thing to do with the story. It's Rudy Ray Moore's comedy night-club act, interspliced, inexplicably, with a naked Africanstyle dancer grinding her hips, vibrating her ass like a paint shaker, and lying on her back and humping her loins across the stage to bongo music. We must admit up front, we don't get this concept entirely, but it's interesting. We think it might be just the thing to spruce up George Bush's next address to the nation or that flagging political campaign. It might even be more interesting if Barbara Bush were willing to dress in this revealing costume and crab walk across the floor, humping at the ceiling, spraying her paste pearls to and fro.

Naw. Maybe we better leave that little plan alone.

Anyway, Rudy goes through his nightclub act. Calls the patrons motherfuckers, niggers, and makes fun of their being overweight and tells one black guy he's so ugly if he stuck his head out a car window while driving, his lips would beat him to

death.

The audience, including the fat, ugly motherfuckers, love this. They clap and laugh, delighted in the fact that they see themselves as fat and ugly and a bunch of niggers.

Now the story starts, and we go with Dolomite to a party at his house that is a combination community upper crust hob knobbing and cocktails and charity benefit and upstairs sex shack.

Seems a local white lady has heard about Dolomite, and knows he's -- as he explains in the film's trailers -- "Got a dong big as King Kong," and she's got to have some of that, and will pay him for thirty minutes of drilling. This bothers Dolomite. He's got business downstairs, but he tells her to loosen up the meat, so to speak, and he'll be back to plant the tree after he gets through downstairs, and sigh, a stud's work is never done, but he's up to it, because Dolomite, motherfuckers, can do it all.

Later, after Dolomite graciously gives away his lovely Alabama home to a local boys charity, he goes upstairs to honor his paid thirty minutes, (We tell you, the man's a saint!) and no sooner is he dropping anchor in the hot mama's ocean, then low and behold and tighten your asshole sphincters, her husband shows up with friends, and the husband is an Alabama cliche cracker sheriff, and his friends are a bunch of deputies and nigger haters. Ouch!

Soon as the sheriff breaks into the room and sees his snowy white wife making a flesh sandwich with a "man of color," he flips his wig and screams for Charlie -- one of the sheriff's dorks -- to kill them both. Dolomite leaps clear, thank goodness, and the hot white Mama, screaming "He made me do it," collects a double barrel's worth of buckshot, and the action kicks into high gear.

Dolomite, butt naked, clothes in his hands, dick flapping like a smoked sausage in a high wind, leaps out of the house and down a startling

steep embankment -- so steep in fact, the film backs up and Dolomite voices over something to the effect -- "You don't believe that shit, do you," and the shot is ran again, Dolomite going down the side of the embankment, burning his naked ass on the grass. A car is waiting below, and Dolomite is rescued by his friends, and they burn rubber. They are pursued by the crackers, and Dolomite, after screaming "Drive, nigger! Drive!" finally decides an ambush is in order. Dolomite has his driver pull over, takes out a shotgun, and lying in ambush says: "He thinks he's bad and ain't got no class. I'm gonna jam this shotgun up this motherfucker's ass."

And no sooner can you conjugate "to motherfuck", than, goddamn it, the sheriff's killed (sort of) and Dolomite and his friends are really on the lamb.

They decide to hitchhike (say what!), and end up hijacking a car driven by an exaggerated gay guy who is willing to be kidnapped and made to travel to California.

After a little on the road hijinks, Dolomite calls a lady friend in California, Queen Bee, a nightclub owner, and tells her he and his friends are on their way. "I had to off a motherfucker, and me and the boys are on the run. Can you dig it?"

Well now, that's the call we're waiting for here at *Trash Theater Central*.

"Hello, *Trash Theater*."

"Yeah, man, this is Dolomite, man. I had to off a motherfucker and me and the boys are on the run. I'm on my way over. Can you dig it?"

No, we can't dig it. Time he and the goys got here, wouldn't be nothing but the wind and a few movie posters blowing through *Trash Theater Central*.

Queen Bee, however, is a real friend. She don't give a rat's ass how many motherfuckers Dolomite's offed. In fact, she sees an advantage to all this, says there couldn't be a better time, the joint is jumping, and she can use a cat like Dolomite.

And not only is the joint jump-

ing, the manager states: "I ain't seen so many niggers in here since Dolomite was here last." The joint is also full of the trashiest polyester and knit 70's disco outfits and shitty show garb you've ever seen this side of Hell's version of Las Vegas. This is the stuff the devil makes you put on in front of a four way mirror, just so he can make fun of you, but everyone at Queen Bee's club thinks they're in the 9's, you know.

This seems the right time to mention in passing, that this is where we're first treated to one of Queen Bee's wigs, obviously made from the hair of the rare polyester parade float, and if this isn't enough for you, keep watching this gal's threads and hairdos. If the movie doesn't keep you interested, her garb, or for that matter, everyone's garb, will hold you. Actually, this shit will kind of stun you, unless you're one of those 70's disco fucks who thought a pimp hat the circumference of a patio umbrella, striped bell bottoms, a plaid Nchrui jacket and a Peace medallion only a little larger than a Mag wheel were the height of fashion. (Well, okay, we're pushing the truth a little, but this is some dazzling stuff.)

But Dolomite is plagued by trouble. It follows him like a dog no matter where he goes. He doesn't want it. He doesn't ask for it. But goddamn it, motherfuckers, the man can't get no rest. Trouble just keeps showing up. It won't leave our man alone.

A rival club, owned by one Cavalletti, an evil white guy, sends

some of his torpedoes over to make trouble for Queen Bee's place. It's such bad trouble, Queen Bee has to close up. And all this happens before Dolomite arrives.

Dolomite, finding the joint locked up tight as a nun's genitals, sets out to find Hurricane Annie. This process subjects us to Dolomite's seriously bad night club act again, and some of his clever maneuvering through the social night club maze in his street smart ways, until he finds Hurricane Annie and gets the facts he needs. That fact being: Queen Bee has got her motherfucking ass in a motherfucking crack.

Hurricane Annie drives Dolomite and his boys to Cavaletti, explaining to Dolomite that "Cavaletti gets rich off niggers and dumb honkeys and I bet Queenie and her girls are in there."

At this point, we kind of forget who was where. Somehow we have another bad night club act, and we discover Queen Bee intact, bad hat and bad wig complete, and that her main girl, "Java", who we suppose is like her major whore or something -- it's nebulous -- has been kidnapped, motherfuckers, and put in a death trap while wearing only her underwear.

The plot becomes complex at this point, actually down right confusing, so let's simplify matters. Okay, Dolomite goes to Cavaletti's house and flashes a velvet painting of a couple fucking. Mrs. Cavaletti, aroused to a fever pitch -- in other words she is on the verge of leaking

honey dew down her leg -- just has to have a piece of Dolomite's flesh pickle.

It's a tough job, but someone has to do it. So, Dolomite is forced to use his patent method of interrogation. He fucks her. He fucks her so hard the house literally falls down around them, as if in an earthquake, and Mrs. Cavaletti, having had the earth move for her, as well as a few other celestial bodies, shrieks in great orgasmic release the location of Queen Bee and her girls.

Now, check out Queen Bee's new hat.

Back to action. Off clump Queen Bee and her hive of whores to Cavaletti's to attack. Of course, everyone knows karate, and of course, the grand master of the grand masters is Dolomite, who shreds everyone without losing the jaunty angle of his pimp hat, and . . .

Ah, fuck it. Everybody gets their ass whipped that isn't with Dolomite and Cavaletti gets his balls gobbled off by rats.

And that's *The Human Tornado*, motherfuckers. Parody, or just dumb or both? You be the judge. Can you dig it?

We were going to do *Dolomite*, the sequel to *Human Tornado*, but we've run out of space, so maybe next time. We also promised a comment or two on the lady who shoves sweet taters up her ass, but that has to wait, too.

So next time, motherfuckers. Can you dig it?

WANT TO:

SUBSCRIBE TO CEMETERY DANCE???
FIND BACK ISSUES OF CEMETERY DANCE???

TURN TO THE BACK COVER
ADVERTISEMENT!

THE WRITERS' HOTLINE

DO YOU WANT TO SELL?

CALL FOR
GUARANTEED MARKETS
FOR YOUR FICTION &
NON-FICTION WORK!



CALL NOW!

1-900-988-1424

Ext: 68

Three minute maximum/\$2 per minute

HORROR * SCIENCE FICTION * FANTASY * MYSTERY

THE ANIMAL

ROBERT PETITT

ROBERT PETITT is a friendly Baton Rouge writer with a taste for hard-edged fiction. His most notable stories have appeared in *Razored Saddles*, *Under The Fang*, and *Dark At Heart*. The following dark suspense story -- as does most of Petitt's work -- reminds me of early Joe R. Lansdale: it's grim, relentless, and powerful in a raw fashion.

Close.

It had been so close this time. He had been a heartbeat from getting caught; the adrenalin hadn't as yet quit pumping through his veins, and he imagined the pounding of his heart could easily be heard in the stillness of the alley. At any moment he expected one of the cops to look up and point him out.

Nyland lay amid the stinking piles of garbage on the freezing grid of metal stairwell and peered through the slits at the activity taking place below. He prayed his willpower was strong enough to keep him from moving -- no shivering from the cold that would cause the trash he was buried in to shift or rustle, thus giving away his hiding place.

Christ, he thought, he couldn't even wipe the blood from his hands for fear of being found. His right hand, held scant inches from his mouth to capture the steam of hot breath, still dripped with blood, and by the glow of the police car headlights he could follow each drop as it trailed down to spatter onto the glistening asphalt surface.

The night air was suddenly filled with the angry wail of a siren, and moments later the alley was bathed in the harsh red flickering of grille-mounted emergency lights. The siren silenced, to be replaced by the strident tread of hard leather soles. The footsteps resounded about the narrow alley, echoing unnaturally loud.

Nyland held his breath when the feet stopped moving immediately beneath him. He could make out the form of a large man dressed in a dark raincoat and wearing a light gray fedora; and though he could not distinguish the man's features from his vantage point, he had little doubt as to his identity.

The man spoke, and when his voice -- a bulldog growl -- grated on Nyland's ears, he knew he had guessed correctly. It was the same man he had seen on television, promising the public that the killer would be apprehended shortly. He had also added that it was his city, and that an animal wasn't going to run free to kill whenever

he chose.

Animal!

That was the name the media had given him, and as that thought struck him like a hammer blow, Nyland involuntarily clenched his fist, then nearly gasped when drops of blood hit the brim of the detective's fedora.

The man raised two fingers to the hat and stared at what he had wiped from the brim. Then he calmly removed a handkerchief from his coat pocket and dabbed off his fingers. He never looked up and Nyland let out a slow, even breath.

"What is it, lieutenant, get some pigeon shit on your hat?" a patrolman asked sarcastically. The other cop guffawed his approval.

"Yeah, something like that. Now, Rencik, if you and your fellow comedian are through with your act, we have police business to take care of. You wise guys ever heard of that before?"

He paused to let the men know he wasn't in a mood to be fucked with, then continued. "No. I didn't think so. Now, show me what you got so I can get my ass to a warmer climate. Someplace where I don't have to be snowbound with Moe and Curly, if you catch my drift."

"Sorry, lieutenant, I didn't know it was your time of the month -- but the body's over here. And it's just like all the others: nothing much left of him at all."

The three men stepped over in front of the patrol car, where they stared down at something. Nyland couldn't see the body, but he didn't need to; he could see the whole thing as he re-enacted it in his mind.

He had followed the young man from the halfway house three blocks down, waiting for the chance to get him alone. The guy had stepped in the alley to take a piss, and Nyland had eased in behind him. It had only taken a few moments to rip the man's clothes off, and then do . . . what had to be done.

"Jesus, I've seen raw hamburger in better shape than this guy," the detective responded in a tone like a growl.

Nyland loved the lieutenant's voice.

"Sure ain't no doubt about who got a hold of him. Only an animal could do something like this to a man."

Nyland's throat constricted and he bit down on his tongue to keep from crying out his rage at that name again. He recognized the drawl of Rencik, and he hated the man, wanted to smash him for what he had said, but he held the red-black anger in check. Later, maybe -- in

a bar or some other public place -- then he could do it right, and nobody would be able to tie him to the killer.

Bulldog: "Where's his prick -- in his mouth?"

Drawl: "Nah, we think he shoved it up his ass this time."

Guffaw: "Had to be the Animal."

"That's right, an animal. But in these cases, I'd say it takes one to know one." Bulldog sigh. "Okay, you guys get on back and fill out your reports. I'll radio the M.E. and wait for them here."

Nyland watched as the patrolmen climbed into their car and backed away, leaving the monotonous red light of the lieutenant's car as the solitary illumination in the dingy alley. He followed the sound of the lieutenant's soles back to his car, heard the hiss and static of the radio, then the echo of the shoes returning.

Shoes that stopped once again beneath him, followed by a bulldog's growl.

"Okay, I know you're up there, but I don't want you to say a word. I'm going to walk to the rear of this alley and relieve myself, and by the time I get back, you should be gone. But I want something in return.

"What I want you to do is to get the piece of paper under my windshield wiper, take it with you and compare it with the list you have. I know you have a list, because you would have to. That's all I ask. Now, you'd better get a move on. There isn't much time."

The footsteps began once more and faded into the distance.

Nyland didn't question his luck. He eased himself from beneath the garbage and deftly dropped to the asphalt below, landing lightly on sneakered feet. For whatever reason, he believed the detective, though he realized the cop could have been just setting him up for a private kill, and the ensuing media attention.

But the man had sounded sincere, and Nyland did pause by the unmarked car just long enough to extract the scrap of paper from the wiper blade before leaving the alley.

Seconds later, when an ambulance whipped around the corner, the streets were empty.

Nyland snapped off the television set and the image of Lieutenant Korsch faded from the screen. He had again promised a quick arrest in the bizarre slayings, perpetrated by a man known only as "The Animal."

Nyland dressed, patted the pocket which held the scrap of paper, and set off for work. He was whistling as he walked to his office.

He unlocked his door, went to his desk, booted up his computer and punched in the name that Lieutenant Korsch had written on the paper. Korsch had also added the words: Top Priority.

Nyland locked the cursor on the name and punched another key. The screen immediately filled with all the pertinent information.

The man's name was Bruce Saxton. He had been arrested six times but had only one conviction. He had served ten months of a five-year sentence for indecency with a child -- was released early due to the overcrowding in the prison, and was currently residing in a halfway house over on Fulsom.

Nyland wrote down that address and rescanned the screen, finding the name immediately: Korsch, Amanda Sue, age six. She had been found strangled with her own dress. She had been raped and sodomized. The man suspected of the act had been arrested, then released due to a technicality. The same man whose name was on Nyland's screen. He had four other charges against him, all for child molestations, and all charges had been dropped.

Nyland blanked out the screen and leaned back in his chair, his hands shaking. When he was in full control of his emotions, he stood. It was time.

Korsch didn't leave the murder scene until everyone had packed it in for the night. Finally, after one last lingering look at the chalk outline of where the body had lain, he called in and checked out for twelve hours. Four to get drunk, six to sleep it off, then the rest to get back to work. But it was the drunk he was looking forward to.

The bar was called Hell's Gates, and it was located exactly nine miles outside the city limits, down an old highway that had seen its better days in the late fifties before the Interstate had been opened. The parking lot held as many motorcycles as cars, and Korsch thought that appropriate. Hell's Gates was a biker hangout for the most part; the only other patrons were usually off-duty cops. But that was what Korsch considered apropos. They were all loners and outcasts, and the citizens didn't really want anything to do with either.

He parked, went inside, and had downed his second whiskey and beer before the stool next to him filled with a person he glanced at but didn't see clearly in the neon-lit, smoke-infested room. Something nudged his arm and he turned, but the figure who had been next to him was moving out the door. A package lay on the stool he had just vacated. The package was leaking what appeared to be blood.

Korsch was reaching for it when a voice stopped him.

"Hey, lieutenant, I hear the Animal got another one tonight."

It was Rencik, no mistaking that drawl, and Korsch frowned. The last thing in the world he wanted was to talk to asshole Rencik, so he grunted in affirmative, removed his hat and set it over the package; not only to cover it, but to keep the patrolman from considering the vacant stool an invitation to sit. Still, it didn't deter Rencik, who thrust himself between the two chairs and sat his beer on the bar.

"Heard the victim's name was Saxton. Name rings

a bell, for some reason. I'm trying to put my finger on it, but just can't place it -- at least, not yet. Sound familiar to you, lieutenant?"

Korsch didn't like the smile on the man's face, and he knew that the fucker was needling him. Korsch didn't take kindly to being pricked.

"Why don't you take a flying fuck, Rencik. Get out of my space, and get out of my face, before I have to move you."

Rencik's eyes narrowed and his nostrils flared, a sneer worked its way across his upper lip, making the thin moustache curl up like a black caterpillar. The sneer was just as quickly replaced with the same shit-eating grin he had worn when he had walked up.

"Sure thing, sir." He backed away. "Sure thing. Wouldn't want to upset you any more than you already are. Maybe you should see about going to a size larger underwear, might help keep you from being so crotchety. Whoops!"

Rencik had -- either accidentally or intentionally -- knocked the hat and the packet beneath it from the stool, causing both items to fall to the floor. The package made a plop! when it struck the tiles, causing blood to ooze out.

Rencik had bent down to retrieve the fallen objects when Korsch's large hand gripped his arm.

"I'll get it. And as I was saying, I'd like to drink in peace."

Rencik straightened, smiled. "Sure thing." He glanced down. "If I were you I'd get that meat home and cook it. Bloody as it is, it's got to be fresh."

He gathered his beer from the bar and moved away, then stopped.

"Oh. And, lieutenant. Speaking of bloody meat, I also hear they haven't found Saxton's dick. Reckon the Animal has gone to taking trophies?"

Korsch didn't answer. His hand still hovered a few inches from the package. Involuntarily, it began to shake.

Korsch rolled down the window as he drove across the bridge, threw the packet into the currents below. Unopened.

Marge was awake when he slipped into the bedroom, moved toward the bath and a scalding hot shower. Her whisper froze him in stride.

"I saw it on the news. It was him, wasn't it?"

"It was him." Voice flat, drained, emotionless.

Sigh from the bed, soft as a soul departing the body.

"Then it's over."

He eased into the bath, gently shut the door, stared at his harsh, haunted reflection in the mirror.

"No," he muttered. "It's never over."

In his den, the animal prowled. Slashing, ripping, rending. His punches and kicks so violent and vicious that the heavy body bag was saturated with sweat and

blood and tears.

Today, as every day, the punching bag had a name. And later on this evening, he would visit a small bar where off-duty policemen hung out, and find the necessary excuse to beat the crap out of a cop named Rencik. And he would enjoy doing it, and not have to worry about the ramifications . . .

There was a knock on the door and a blue-uniformed man stuck his head inside.

Nyland grinned at the man. "You can't be serious, it's not that time already."

The other man smiled and made a pretense of checking his watch.

"Afraid so, everybody's already seated, Your Honor."

- CD





BOB MORRISH INTERVIEWS DONALD GRANT

SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLISHING

This issue's look at the folks behind the scenes in small press publishing focuses on Donald Grant, one of the true veterans of the small press scene. Grant first became involved in publishing in the mid-1940s, when he started a venture with Thomas Hadley. Grant was still in his teens then, and only a single book resulted from that venture before military service took Grant away from the business. Grant's next big plunge into publishing occurred in 1949, when he initiated the Grandon imprint, resulting in five books published over the next nine years, before lackluster sales drove Grant to abandon genre publishing for a while.

The third time proved the charm, however, as Grant began anew in 1964, using his own name for the imprint and beginning with a bibliography of Edgar Rice Burroughs, followed by two Robert E. Howard collections. Much as Jack Vance has been the mainstay for Underwood-Miller, and R.A. Lafferty for Corroboree Press, so has Howard proven to be the anchor for Grant's operations. Grant has gone on to publish 107 books under his own imprint over the last 28 years, and 34 of those have been by or about Howard.

Another important turning point in Grant's publishing career came with the publication of Stephen King's

The Dark Tower in 1982, an event which led to further King titles, and a significant infusion of capital. In fact, Grant's first full-time employee, Robert Wiener joined the operation in 1981, shortly before the publication of *The Dark Tower*. Wiener is now a full partner and manages all the day-to-day operations of the business, as Grant seeks to relax a little after six decades in the publishing business.

Today, Donald Grant is one of the prime examples of a successful small press. In view of the firm's relative prosperity of late, it's easy to forget that, as author and small press collector Jack Chalker puts it: "It only took [Grant] 40 years to become an overnight success in the publishing business."

CEMETERY DANCE: The first book you published -- *Rhode Island on Lovecraft* -- was actually under the Grant-Hadley imprint, wasn't it?

DONALD GRANT: That's correct. That was in 1945.

CD: The story goes that you met Tom Hadley at a sale of Lovecraft's personal library -- is that true?

GRANT: No, that's not true. We met in a bookstore. That story is

fictitious; Lovecraft's library was sold directly to a couple of bookstores, and there was never any such public sale.

CD: That initial publishing partnership got interrupted by military service, correct?

GRANT: That's right. Tom Hadley and I were in partnership, but then I went into the Army in 1945. Ken Krueger, who was also in the military and stationed close to Providence at that time, joined the organization while I was away. When I came back, I went to college. I had gotten three semesters in before getting drafted, so I was actually returning to college when I got out of the Army. (Eds. note: while Grant was in the service, Krueger and Hadley changed the name of the company to The Buffalo Book Co., but only published two titles under that imprint.)

CD: Were you involved in the next incarnation, Hadley Publishing Co. (which was formed by Hadley in 1946, after he and Krueger split up)?

GRANT: I was involved, to an extent. I was busy with college, and Hadley Publishing was totally Tom's company, but I did help him on occasion.

CD: You became fully involved once again with the formation of Grandon Publishing, correct?

GRANT: That's correct. That must have been around 1949 when the first Grandon book came out. But all that time (even when not directly involved in publishing), I was selling books.

CD: So, to clarify: during this period, and on into the 60s, you were maintaining an out-of-print mail order bookselling business as well?

the field. I did a number of tax books for local towns during that period -- as many as ten in one year, I believe -- and a number of other books that were not under my name.

The bookselling was not my main source of income. Really, nothing was my main source of income in those days. Just to get along from month to month was a struggle.

CD: When did you cease the OP bookselling business? Why?

though at one time it was very large. At this point, I have an excellent collection of lost race books, a very extensive Talbot Mundy collection, a collection of *Adventure Magazine* starting with #1, which came out in 1910, and running into the '50s -- so there are quite a few hundred copies of that. I've got a rather good group of *Hutchinson's Magazine*, a British magazine. And some contemporary deluxe signed editions. And, I guess, a good solid fantasy art collection.

CD: Your last Grandon book was H. Warner Munn's *Werewolf of Ponkert* in 1958 -- why did you cease publishing under the Grandon imprint at that time?

GRANT: Because I was doing so much extracurricular work -- printing and typesetting, such as the town tax books I mentioned. It became simpler to handle everything I was doing as one entity, and the genre books got squeezed out.

CD: You later reprinted the Munn title as a Centaur book (more on Centaur in a minute), and also published two "sequel" volumes of short stories by Munn under the Donald Grant imprint -- is Munn a big favorite of yours? Did you consider publishing additional material by Munn?

GRANT: Munn was a close friend. He was sort a leftover from the Lovecraft era. I did consider publishing other things by him, but never did. At this point, it's doubtful if I ever will.

CD: Between the last Grandon imprint book in 1958 and the first Donald Grant imprint book in 1964, what did you do?

GRANT: I guess it was about a dozen years ago. There was just too much to do in regard to publishing to keep up the bookselling.

CD: You've been involved with bookselling and publishing most of your life. Do you have a large personal collection? Any particular specialty to your collection?

GRANT: I would say my collection, at this time, is moderate in size, al-



Was that your main source of income, or was that a sideline business?

GRANT: I was selling books there for many years. After college, out-of-print bookselling was a major job for me, but in order to survive (fantasy & SF were not exactly popular in those days; in fact, they were looked down on), I bought an offset press about 1956. I used that to do several small books, many of them outside of

GRANT: I continued doing various printing and typesetting work -- the tax books and so forth -- as well as the OP bookselling. As far as genre publishing, I did a few things on the side. I helped Joseph Payne Bren-

nan put out a few books under his Macabre House imprint.

CD: What led you to get back into publishing with your own imprint in 1964?

GRANT: Times were changing, and I thought things were opening up a little bit more for fantasy and SF. And with the Heinz bibliography, I thought we had a very substantial piece of work.

CD: You've gone on to become Robert E. Howard's "personal publisher," much as Underwood-Miller has become Jack Vance's primary specialty publisher. Back in 1964, when you started publishing again, did you ever intend to/hope to do so many Howard titles?

GRANT: I didn't know, back then, how far it would go. I don't think anyone dreamed that we'd wind up doing all the Howard titles.

CD: When did you decide to do the complete Conan series? How many are left to go?

GRANT: The first one (in the series) was *People of the Black Circle*, and that came out in... 1973, I think, and the series has gone from there. There are about four books left to go.

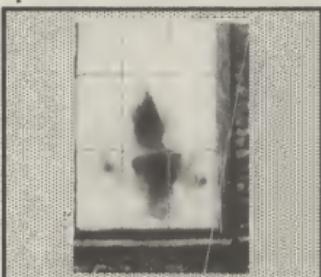
CD: You went from a pretty modest total of books published annually in the late '60s (one in '68, zero in '69) to being quite prolific in the mid-to-late '70s (eight books in '75; nine in '79). Was this increase just a case of acquiring sufficient capital? Having more time to devote to the press?

GRANT: I would say it was a case of acquiring sufficient capital. The idea, the thought, had always been to get into publishing, and the money was finally there. There were indications that these books (the ones published in the mid-to-late '70s) would sell, particularly with the illustrations. We

were among the first to introduce illustrations as a major part of a book, and I think that the illustrations did have some effect on sales.

CD: You were also involved in another publishing venture in the '70s, namely Centaur Press, which specialized first in mass-market format paperbacks, and then later in trade paperbacks. How did Centaur come about? Was the Charles Collins who was involved in that venture the same Collins who edited a couple of horror anthologies in the late '60s?

GRANT: Yes, that was the same Charles Collins. I had known Charles for many years and considered him a close personal friend. Charles and I talked things over and came up with the concept for the TimeLost books (ed. note: Centaur exclusively published books in their "TimeLost



series" -- long out-of-print books which were felt to be classics worthy of reprinting), and that's why we started Centaur, to publish those books.

CD: How did the books in the TimeLost series sell?

GRANT: They did not sell. We were not very successful with Centaur.

CD: One of the "first novels" you've published over the years was Galad Elflandsson's werewolf novel, *The Black Wolf*. Did that novel simply come in as an unsolicited submission? Do you have a "slush pile?"

GRANT: Yes, it was a submission,

and we liked it and chose to publish it. And yes, we do get a fair amount of [unsolicited submissions].

CD: Around the same time as the Elflandsson book, you published an extremely abridged version, entitled *The Dream Of X*, of William Hope Hodgson's classic *The Night Land* -- why did you decide to publish this book, and why in the abridged state?

GRANT: It was quite a unique item and had never been [reprinted], and... if you look at *The Night Land*, it's an extremely long book, and a lot of people have told me over the years that they felt it was rather slow-moving in its lengthy, original form. So we figured that the abridged version had more potential.

CD: Your fortunes took a decided turn for the better with the publication of Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* in 1981. How did you come to acquire the rights to that book, and to the other titles in the *Dark Tower* series?

GRANT: King was in town to speak at Providence College. We went out to dinner and, of course, I was interested in what he was doing, and he was interested in what I was doing, and... I asked if he had anything he'd like to do in a deluxe edition. He said "would you consider *The Dark Tower*?" Of course, I didn't have to stop and consider it -- I knew that I wanted to do it.

CD: At that point, had the *Dark Tower* saga yet started to be serialized in *The Magazine Of Fantasy And Science Fiction*?

GRANT: Yes, it had. The version we published was rewritten slightly.

CD: What have the print runs of each book in the series been?

GRANT: I think I can come up with those figures... for *The Gunslinger* (Volume I), there were 10,000 cop-

ies of the first trade edition, and I think 600 of the first deluxe edition. There there was a reprint of 10,000, which was issued at King's direction. He had originally not intended to allow it to be published in an edition of more than 10,000. I think Volumes II and III were 30,000 and 40,000 copies, respectively.

CD: Was King's change of heart about reprinting Volume I because of the inadvertent listing of the book in the front matter of the mass market edition of *Pet Sematary* (which led to public awareness of, and demand for, the book)?

involved in the series. I think King would tell you that the book is more or less writing itself. He's apt to go anywhere with it. Just from the flow of the book, you can see that it is almost writing itself. He's changing his ideas along the way . . . which makes it very, very interesting.

CD: How did the book *As It Is Written*, which was initially purported to be by Clark Ashton Smith, come to be published by you? Were you embarrassed when the truth -- that it was apparently *not* by Smith -- was discovered, or did you consider it to be no big deal?

Ashton Smith. Certainly, if it wasn't by Clark Ashton Smith, it had to be by an individual who influenced him (and his style) very strongly.

It's a very unique experience. I would be embarrassed if it were the truth, but I think the jury's still out on it.

CD: Twice now -- with Peter Tremayne's *Revenge of Dracula* and with Les Daniels' *The Yellow Fog* -- you've published a single volume out of an ongoing series. Any particular reason for this?

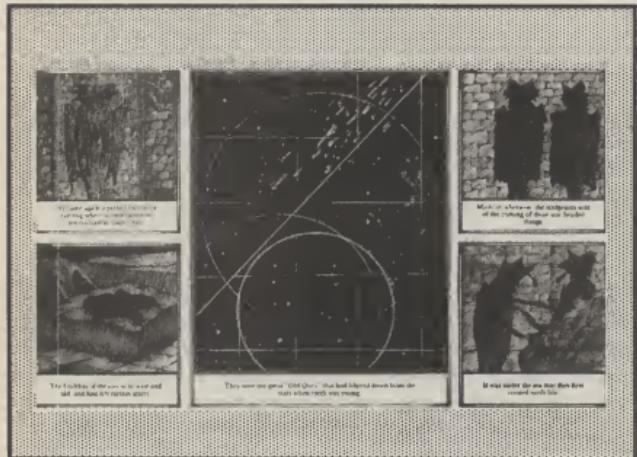
GRANT: Well, with *Revenge of Dracula* . . . I had worked closely with Peter Beresford Ellis (the man behind the Tremayne pen name), and he presented the book to me, and I thought it would do reasonably well with the proper illustrations. And it did well, it sold out.

As for *The Yellow Fog*, it was a different version of the manuscript than the mass-market version. Les Daniels is a local boy, and he approached me about it, and we had an illustrator who we thought was very good, and who wanted to tackle it. It was something that I thought would work, but it hasn't done that well.

CD: Much of the art in your books has been extremely impressive -- by Stephen Gervais, Ned Dameron, and the like. Do you choose the artists yourself, or did you until you made Thomas Canty your art director?

GRANT: I still think there's something there to be uncovered. If it is the truth, then sure, I'm embarrassed, although the book did sell out.

It is very confusing to me to hear . . . to reconcile some of this. The [people associated with *Odyssey* publishing] found the original manuscript and compared the typescript of that manuscript with some of Clark Ashton Smith's manuscripts and they decided that they had come out of the same typewriter -- that the manuscript was, in fact, Smith's. Also, the authorities on Clark Ashton Smith -- Donald Sidney-Fryer, Roy Squires, and Will Murray -- all were of the opinion that it was written by Clark



GRANT: That probably helped a lot. I think there were a lot of factors, though.

CD: Did King have a lot of say in regard to the print runs of Volumes II and III?

GRANT: Yes, he dictated them.

CD: Any indication yet from King when he's going to turn in Volume IV? Is he still planning on it being a six-volume series?

GRANT: No, no word on number IV. I don't think that there has ever been a set total number of books

GRANT: Canty is sort of our unofficial art director. We'd like him to be [more involved], but he doesn't like to be tied down too much. He's constantly experimenting, and if you know Thomas Canty, you know that he's his own man.

As far as the choice of artists, we listen to the writers' ideas, whenever possible, and try to match up a writer with an artist. Tom Canty is often part of the decision process; Robert Wiener is drawn into it, I'm drawn into it.

CD: Do you normally contact the artists that you want to use, or do you choose artists via unsolicited art submissions? Is there a "normal" way of doing it?

GRANT: No, there is no normal way. I like to tell the story about *At The Mountains Of Madness* -- I had no intention of doing that book. It was not part of our schedule. But this artist from Brazil, Fernando Duval, had a representative call on the John Hay Library at Brown University with samples of Duval's work -- he had illustrated the entire story of *At The Mountains Of Madness*. Brown University sent the representative to see me. I liked the work, and I just thought it should be done. It turned out as an oblong book, which is more difficult to do, and quite a bit more expensive, but we just thought it was something that should be done.

CD: How did Robert Wiener become involved with your operations? What role does he play in the business?

GRANT: He had been involved in some things in the genre, reprinting rare magazines, doing art prints, and so forth, for years, and . . . I needed help. So he came aboard, and he's a full partner now. I'm trying to cut back, and he is the president of the company now.

(Robert Wiener elaborates on his background: I've known Doc since 1966, and have done a variety of things in the field. I was one of five people involved with Odyssey Publications, which specialized in pulp reprints, and also printed new material on pulp characters, such as the Shadow and Doc Savage. I also formed a company called TKII with the artist Vaughn Bode, to produce t-shirts and posters of his characters; we later branched out and did works by other artists, such as Jeff Jones and Gahan Wilson. Later, after Vaughn died, I started Archival Press, Inc., where we produced limited

edition art portfolios, prints, and books.)

CD: Are there other full-time employees in the business?

GRANT: There is one other full-time employee, Anne Howland.

CD: You still live in Rhode Island, but Robert Wiener now operates the business out of New Hampshire -- why? (And just how great is the distance?)

GRANT: It's a couple of hours drive to get up there. As for why . . . he's got lots of room up in New Hampshire for the operation, and . . . I'm trying to ease off as much as possible, in my old age. I've been in the business a long time. You find that after a certain point you just can't do these 15 or 20 hour days anymore.

CD: You published several books by the late Joseph Payne Brennan; I've heard that you may be publishing a forthcoming Brennan biography -- is this true?

GRANT: Well, R.Dixon Smith is working on a biography/bibliography of Brennan. It hasn't been finished as of this time, but I assume it will be. I think Joe wanted us to publish it. If and when it's completed, we'll publish it.

CD: What else do you have forthcoming? Are you still doing an edition of Straub's *Koko*?

GRANT: Yes, we're still planning on doing *Koko*. Beyond that . . . there's *The Haunted Pamparo* by William Hope Hodgson, which is a short story collection, with a very long article by Sam Moskowitz on Hodgson.

There's also *People Of The Darkness* by E. Charles Vivian, *The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* by Orson Scott Card, and *Metahorror*, which is an anthology edited by Dennis Etchison.

JOHN W. KNOTT, JR. BOOKSELLER

SPECIALIZING IN FINE
FIRST EDITIONS
OF SCIENCE FICTION,
FANTASY & HORROR.

CATALOGS ISSUED—
WANT LISTS
WELCOME.

MANY FINE ITEMS
SOLD BY DIRECT
QUOTE.

WE ALSO BUY SCIENCE
FICTION & FANTASY
BOOK COLLECTIONS
OR SINGLE ITEMS.
(HIGH QUALITY OR UN-
USUAL ITEMS ESPE-
CIALL Y SOUGHT)

WRITE OR PHONE:

JOHN KNOTT, JR.
BOOKSELLER

8453 EARLY BUD WAY
LAUREL, MARYLAND
20723

PHONE/FAX: 301-317-8427



KATHRYN
PTACEK

ANTHOLOGY ATTIC

Please, please, please, let's put a moratorium on vampire stories! It's not that I hate the little blood-suckers; I mean, I really enjoy vampires and their kith and kin (lamias even, which I've written about). But vampires are suffering from overkill, as it were. They're *everywhere*. Unfortunately. And they just won't go away. They're in the movies (yet another version of Bram Stoker's Dracula will be released next year with Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing; I'll go see it, of course); you look at any bookshelf in the horror/suspense section nowadays of any bookstore, and the shelves fairly drip with vampires. You talk to just about any writer and she/he has a vampire tale written/being thought of/just sent out. I even reviewed an anthology of vampire stories (*Under The Fang*) in the first installment of this column. And I'm gonna do it again.

But please, let's put the vampires away for a while. They're being overdone, and few creative angles are showing up, and they're just getting so . . . predictable and boring. And I hate to see that; I really do. I want vampires to be exciting and dangerous and electrifyingly sexual (all those who like Frank Langella raise your hands, and please stop drooling; you're leaving spots on the carpet), but vampires are in danger of becoming just another wearisome

horror critter.

So, let's not put out a vampire story/novel/movie for a year or two. Imagine how much fresher they'll be after that absence. It'll almost be like welcoming a long-lost friend home.

Now, on to the reviews. Remember, if you will, that just because I don't mention something doesn't mean I didn't like it. Space is limited, and I'm trying to hit the highlights.

Present

The Ultimate Frankenstein (Byron Preiss, Series Editor; David Keller, Megan Miller, John Betancourt, editors; Dell; 327 pages; \$10; ISBN 0-440-50352-3).

Frankly (yes, pun intended), this was my least favorite of the three volumes; and I'm not sure why. I like the Frankenstein monster and the movies well enough; but perhaps the idea is too limited, although not every story was directly about Dr. Frankenstein and his infamous creation. However, I liked that the settings ranged from historical to future, traditional to science fiction. There was also, I found, many references to professional wrestling throughout these stories, which I guess is to be expected when one of the characters is as huge as the Monster.

Brian Aldiss's poignant tale is told from the point-of-view of the Monster in "Summertime Was Nearly Over." Mike Resnick contributes an amusing futuristic story with "Monsters of the Midway." In "Chui Chai" S.P. Somtow grimly examines the artificially living in a very different way. I have been reading a number of stories by Somtow recently and have to say that his are remarkable -- he gives them something different; it's not the same old slant, and I hope to see more stories from him. "Mad at the Academy" by Esther M. Friesner is a wry look at Hollywood and what can happen at those awards ceremonies.

Other contributors include Katherine Dunn, Michael Bishop, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., F. Paul Wilson, Philip Jose Farmer, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Benjamin M. Schutz, Loren D. Estleman, Steve Rasnic Tem and Melanie Tem, David J. Schow, Karen Haber, Garfield Reeves-Stevens, Joyce Harrington, Charles de Lint, George Alec Effinger.

The Ultimate Dracula (Byron Preiss, Series Editor; David Keller, Megan Miller, John Betancourt, editors; Dell; 358 pages; \$10; ISBN 0-440-50353-1).

Well, by the time I'd hit this volume, I was Vampired-Out, so I'm sure that colored my perception just the tiniest bit. Still there was some

good writing here. Again, the stories ranged from historical to the futuristic, and as you might imagine with anything to do with blood these days, disease was a theme in many of the stories.

The standout story was Dan Simmons' "All Dracula's Children" set in present-day Romania and which shows us the true horror: the babies and children left to rot in the so-called orphanages under Ceausescu's reign.

Bela Lugosi is the protagonist in Kevin J. Anderson's "Much At Stake," a solid tale. W. R. Philbrick goes to Haiti in "The Dark Rising." And in the mall in John Gregory Betancourt's "In the Cusp of the Hour" you'd best watch out for those old folks sitting on the benches.

Other contributors included Anne Rice, Ron Dee, Ed Gorman, Heather Graham, Steve Rasnic Tem and Melanie Tem, Philip Jose Farmer, Edward D. Hoch, Janet Asimov, Karen Robards, Dick Lochte, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Tim Sullivan, Mike Resnick, John Lutz, Kristine Kathryn Rusch.

The Ultimate Werewolf (Byron Preiss, Series Editor; David Keller, Megan Miller, John Betancourt, editors; Dell; 359 pages; \$10; ISBN 0-440-50354-x).

And of the three volumes, I liked it by far the best. I think the stories were more interesting, compelling, and just super. Yeah, I liked it.

Philip Jose Farmer tells us about a sheriff and a doctor, one of whom is a werewolf, in "Wolf, Iron, and Moth." Nina Kiriki Hoffman's "Unleashed" was a truly outstanding story about a female werewolf and what happens when she's the mother of a small child. "The Mark of the Beast" by Kim Antieau was a beautifully-written historical tale, and as I read it, I wondered if she's ever thought of writing in this period; she captured it completely. One of the strongest stories was Craig Shaw Gardner's "Day of the Wolf," which

puts a bit of a different spin on the werewolf tale; it's a convincing, well-written story. Pat Murphy's "South of Oregon City" was another neat historical tale, while "Pure Silver" by A. C. Crispin and Kathleen O'Malley was a serious story about a woman working for the SPCA who crosses paths with a werewolf. Brad Linaweaver contributes a humorous



tale in "Close Shave," while Stuart Kaminsky travels to Russia in "Full Moon Over Moscow."

Other contributors include Harlan Ellison, Kathe Koja, Jerome Charyn, Mel Gilden, Nancy A. Collins, Larry Niven, Kevin J. Anderson, Robert J. Randisi, Bill Pronzini, Brad Strickland, Robert E. Weinberg, Robert Silverberg.

One of the strengths of these books was that we didn't have the same old names in each and every edition, although there were of course well-known writers. We also had some unknowns (at least to me) and some folks from other genres (notably sf and mystery). I think that sort of thing can only serve to strengthen an anthology and the horror genre -- too much from the same small band of writers gets to be a tad dull after a while. New blood is always welcomed.

Hotter Blood (Jeff Gelb and Michael Garrett, editors; Pocket Books; 330 pages; \$4.95; ISBN 0-671-70149-5)

This is subtitled "More Tales of EROTIC HORROR." The all-caps is not mine. This is a companion volume to Gelb's *Hot Blood* (co-edited with Lonn Friend). And I understand there's a third installment on its way.

Hot? Hotter? Well... maybe. There sure wasn't anything here that curled my hair, but then maybe I'm just unshockable (then again...). Anyway, I really enjoyed Richard Laymon's blackly humorous "The Tub" which features precisely what you think it does; Stephen Gallagher gets a little kinky in "DeVICE" when a guy goes to a bar on Christmas Eve; and Lucy Taylor lets us know she's really a sick puppy in "Atrocities" about a good little girl. One of the more unusual stories was Grant Morrison's "The Braille Encyclopedia" about a blind woman who is searching -- and finds; the story is strong and unforgettable.

Other stories are by John L. Byrne, Ray Garton, Chet Williamson, Nancy A. Collins, Kurt Busiek, Stephen Gresham, Gary Brandner, Lisa W. Cantrell, Paul Dale Anderson, J. N. Williamson and James Kisner, Kiel Stuart, Rex Miller, Graham Masterton, Elsa Rutherford, Dan D'Amassa, R. Patrick Gates, Michael Newton, John Shirley and Karl Edward Wagner.

Shock Rock (Jeff Gelb, editor; *Pocket Books*; 270 pages; \$4.99; ISBN 0-671-70150-9).

So, horror and rock-and-roll. A natural, you say. Kind of like peanut butter and jelly, rum and Coke, or ham and cheese, right?

Yeah. But.

But there was something definitely lacking in this combination (with a short and kinda odd intro by Alice Cooper) and I'm not sure what it was. The stories weren't bad; but mostly they weren't great. Maybe I anticipated too much; maybe too many were predictable -- for most I'd guessed the ending before I'd read two or three pages (but I have this tendency anyway . . .). Despite that, there were some good stories. In "Bob Dylan, Troy Johnson, and the Speed Queen," F. Paul Wilson looks at what might/what could be; it really isn't a horror tale in some ways, and maybe that's why I think it's one of the more successful. I also liked David J. Schow's wry "Odeed"; or is that cynical? Maybe I've gone beyond the wry point. Jimi Hendrix comes alive in Graham Masterton's "Voodoo Child"; and John Shirley finishes up the volume with a nifty (and one of the longer ones) tale in "Flaming Telepaths."

Other contributors: Stephen King, Nancy A. Collins, Ronald Kelly, Don D'Amassa, Paul Dale Anderson, Michael Garrett, Brain Hodge, R. Patrick Gates, Rex Miller, Billy Mumy and Peter David, Richard Christian Matheson, Michael Newton, Mark Verheiden, Ray Garton, John L. Byrne, Thomas Tessier.

Future

May is the month for *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, edited by Christopher Baldick (*Oxford University Press*). Come July we have a *Carroll & Graf* anthology edited by Stephen Jones: *The Mammoth Book of Vampires* and *Book of the Dead #2: Still Dead*, edited by John Skipp and Craig Spector. *The Year's Best*

Fantasy and Horror: Fifth Annual Collection, edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling (*St. Martin's*) will be out in August.

Past

This past autumn saw the publication of *Final Shadows* (*Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group*; 490 pages; \$12 trade paperback; ISBN 0-385-24646-3) and the swan song of one of the longest-running (in America) original award-winning anthology series, edited by Charles L. Grant. *Shadows* was a remarkable series in a number of ways: it introduced us way back when to many now well-known folks who were just starting out; the stories were all original, all contemporary dark fantasy (also known as quiet horror or dark fantasy) that spoke more of the horror in ourselves and the ones we love than of hulking slavering one-eyed beasts; and more than any other anthology series (or any all-original anthology) edited by a guy, *Shadows* showed us women writers at a time when that wasn't particularly fashionable and when most people were surprised to learn that women horror writers even existed.

The series began in 1978 being published by *Doubleday*, and included a *Best of Shadows*.

A number of contributors are better-known in other fields (sf, fantasy and mystery); sadly, some have died over the years (notably Brennan, Grubb and Wellman). Below is a partial list of contributors: Kim Antieau, Michael Bishop, Robert Bloch, Joseph Payne Brennan, Pat Cadigan, Jack Cady, Ramsey Campbell, Michael Cassutt, R. Chetwynd-Hayes, John Crowley, Avram Davidson, Dennis Etchison, Alan Dean Foster, Janet Fox, Stephen Gallagher, Craig Shaw Gardner, William Gibson, Davis Grubb, Melissa Mia Hall, Brian Hodge, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, Nancy Holder, Leslie Alan Horvitz, Stephen King, Tabitha King, Joe R. Lansdale, Tanith Lee,

Brain Lumley, Graham Masterton, Richard Christian Matheson, Ardath Mayhar, David Morrell, Pat Murphy, William F. Nolan, Bill Pronzini, Marta Randall, Ray Russell, Al Sarrantonio, John Shirley, Guy N. Smith, J. Michael Straczynski, Bernard Taylor, Melanie Tem, Steve Rasnic Tem, Peter Tremayne, Lisa Tuttle, Manly Wade Wellman, Chet Williamson, Douglas E. Winter, T. M. Wright, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

Shadows gave us many years of reading enjoyment, many years of good writing and effective chilling.

Shadows will be missed.

That's all for now. The next column will be on mystery/suspense anthologies. Keep reading. And if you have any suggestions (please be kind), write to me at P.O. Box 97, Newton NJ 07860, or fax them to me at (201) 579-6441.



SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Established writer or new writer, reader or fan, if you're interested in interviews, reviews, market news and controversial think pieces about genre fiction of all kinds—MYSTERY, HORROR, CRIME, ESPIONAGE—then subscribe to *Mystery Scene* today, 6 issues only \$37.50. All foreign subscriptions, including Canada, are \$55.00.

Fill out your name and information below. Send with your check to:

MYSTERY SCENE
3840 Clark Road S.E.
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

CD12

Paul Sammon's



ROUGH CUTS

A rash of exciting new tapes and laserdisks has recently broken out in software bins everywhere. This condition -- plus a look at video bootlegging and a continuation of last issue's list of recommended film magazines -- takes up most of *Rough Cuts* this time out. These topics also force me to forego my customary rant against the greedy Republican-weasels who are systematically screwing this country into the ground.

Keep this in mind, though: if you vote for George Bush in November '92, in spite of everything associated with him -- the October Surprise, the Iraq War, the stubborn inattention to the AIDS crisis, Operation Black Eagle, the scandal-ridden business practices of Bush's sons and brothers, 1991/92's severe recession, the abandonment of our educational system, the mounting national debt, Washington's ongoing war against the fundamental right of a woman to choose what to do with her own body, the current administration's relentless chipping away at free speech, the arts, and private property -- if you *do* vote for this smiling little bastard, and he manages to sleaze his way to a second term--

--you'll get exactly what you deserve.

Loose Ends and Video Piracy

Last issue's column inadvertently left out the address and telephone number of two entries in my alphabetically arranged "Recommended Film Magazines" list. My apologies to those publications involved--this column's usually written in the very wee hours of the early a.m., and fueled by way too many kidney-punishing cups of coffee. So somewhere between the caffeine and those endless trips to the bathroom I forgot to include:

Cinefex (Editor, Jody Duncan. Publisher, DonShay. P.O. Box 20027, Riverside CA 92516. 714-243-8659. Single issue \$5.95, four issues \$22.00).

The premiere publication on cinematic special effects.

Deep Red (Editor/Publisher Chas. Balun. 8456 Edinger Ave., Suite 111, Huntington Beach CA 92647).

The premiere publication on splatter films.

Ok? Ok.

Incidentally, *Deep Red's* *gore emeritus* Chas. Balun was recently raked over the coals by *Film Threat Video Guide* (issue #4) for Balun's occasional practice of selling bootleg copies of hard-to-obtain horror films.

Now, while I've always enjoyed *Film Threat Video Guide's* snide sense of humor and willingness to tackle sacred cows, this time they fucked up. Talk about people living in glass houses -- long before the *Film Threat Video Guide* became a reality, it's fellow publication *Film Threat* had a thriving bootleg business of its own! As editor Rick Sullivan recently commented (on this same topic) in issue #106 of his *Gore Gazette*, "... it doesn't seem like too long ago that the *Film Threat* crew was financing its (own) operations by offering the likes of poor quality dups of the Go-Go's sticking dildos up the asshole of a coked-out roadie."

Exactly.

Yet besides hypocrisy, there's a broader issue involved here -- the fundamental question of (genre) video bootlegging itself.

Now, we're not talking companies who knock off 10,000 dubs of *Pretty Woman*. Sure, piracy of everything from software to audio to video is indeed a major worldwide problem, one sucking away billions of dollars in illegal profits. But the majority of *horror-oriented* video bootlegging operations are definitely *not* controlled by the Mafia, or raking in sweaty fistfuls of major bucks.

On the contrary, these minuscule enterprises are typically oper-

ated by hard-core film buffs who pass on their passions for certain motion pictures by dubbing and then selling them for subsistence-level profits. And whether they deal in newer product that's never been released in this country or specialize in public domain films which no other companies seem to want, video bootleggers perform an important service to both the worldwide motion picture community and film scholarship.

That is, bootleggers make available certain motion pictures which either have not been seen in the United States (like 1978's exploitative titled but genuinely classic *Cannibal Holocaust*) or have faded into undeserved obscurity (like 1936's *The Man Who Lived Again*, aka *The Man Who Changed His Mind*). Furthermore, most of these video mail-order enterprises are basically *ethical*; they routinely cease to distribute those titles which *do* become legally available in the United States.

Not that there aren't rip-off bootleggers at even this dim end of the distribution spectrum: Donald Farmer's MONDO VIDEO is an infamous recent example. Still, there's a fundamental difference between *copying* something that's already commercially available and *offering* something that isn't.

But to get back to the Balun/*Film Threat* controversy, I suspect this tempest is basically bullshit anyway. FTVG specifically took Balun to task for pirating copies of the 1987 corpse-fucking splatterfilm *Nekromantik* — a title which, not so coincidentally, *Film Threat* recently claims to have picked up the sole distributing rights for. Knowing this, doesn't *Film Threat*'s posturing suddenly smack of someone trying to muscle out the competition? Besides, Balun was offering copies of this film long before *Film Threat* got into the act.

So the noble anti-bootlegging sentiments *Film Threat* ran up its editorial flagpole during its attacks on Balun look kinda suspect to me.

Amazing how quickly a fan's untainted love for the genre can be polluted by the color of money, isn't it?

VIDEO REVIEWS

(Note: *Videos/laserdisks are rated from one to four stars, with four stars being best*)

Black Rainbow (1989) **1/2
D: Mike Hodges. Color, 99 minutes.
With: Rosanna Arquette, Jason Robards, Tom Hulce. (Media/Fox Video)

Jason Robards and Rosanna Arquette star as a phony father/daughter spiritualist act with an evangelical twist -- Arquette goes into "trances" at small-town churches and pretends to contact the dead, while Robards rakes in donations from gullible relatives of the dear departed. But when Rosanna's trances suddenly turn genuine, she finds herself talking to the spirits of people who aren't even dead yet!

Unfortunately, they soon will be...

Written and directed by the always interesting Brit filmmaker Mike Hodges (who helmed the undervalued *The Terminal Man*, the unnecessarily excoriated *Flash Gordon* remake and the vicious little gangster thriller *Get Carter*), *Black Rainbow* is only an intermittently effective production: overall, it feels padded and a little tired. The film also leans too heavily on the cliched generic plot of a fake mentalist whose "power" suddenly becomes real (the best example of which is 1934's *The Clairvoyant*, aka *The Evil Mind*, a terrific little English picture starring Claude Rains).

Other *Rainbow* mis-steps include Arquette herself, who's embarrassingly miscast. And *Black Rainbow* overplays its hand; the first scene of Arquette contacting the soon-to-be dead develops into a tense, surprisingly eerie setpiece. But then Hodges makes the mistake of re-

peating these ghostly chats once too often, seriously diluting their impact. Worst of all, *Black Rainbow*'s climax makes absolutely no sense; it throws in an extra paranormal power at film's end just to leave us with an unearned *frisson*.

So why bother with this picture in the first place? Because it's an atmospheric little fantasy that works as a cynical character study, one aided by authentic rural locations (North Carolina) and some amusingly sarcastic jibes at evangelical sleaziness. It may only be sporadically successful, to be sure, but *Black Rainbow* is still an intriguing, overlooked little sleeper well worth the price of an overnight's rental.

Especially if you can get it for a discount.

The Devil's Daughter (*The Sect*) (Italian -- 1991) *** D: Michele Soavi. Color, 117 minutes. With: Kelly Curtis, Herbert Lom, Maria Angela Giordano, Michael Adatto, Carla Cassola, Tomas Arana. (Republic Home Video)

Italian horror films are very much a matter of taste. Some viewers find them stupid and illogical. Others say "Sure they are!", but then add words like "stylish"; "hypnotic"; "surreal".

I fall into the latter camp, which was why the early 1992 video release of *The Devil's Daughter* (known in Italy as *The Sect*) had me giddy with anticipation. After all, *Daughter* was written/produced by Dario Argento, the *maestro* of cinematic cruelty; it was also directed by Michele Soavi, an Argento protege whose earlier *Stage Fright* (Imperial Entertainment) and *The Church* (Southgate Entertainment) were self-assured exercises in stylized sadism.

So was my anticipation fulfilled? Yes and no. *The Devil's Daughter* is a macabre occult shocker graced with lush photography and marvelous touches. It's also very slow and overlong; two hours is a lot to ask from any Italian horror picture, even one this polished (except,

maybe, Argento's *Deep Red*).

Anyway, here's the (slim) plot:

Kelly Curtis (Jamie Lee's younger sister) plays a lonely school teacher whose car nearly runs down a strange tramp (Lom, in usual fine form). Feeling sorry for seedy old Herbert, Curtis takes Lom home. Bad move -- before long, the tramp's dropped dead and Curtis is bedeviled by increasingly bizarre supernatural events, ones culminating in an Italianate version of *Rosemary's Baby*.

There's no denying that *The Devil's Daughter* is a sumptuous visual feast for connoisseurs of the Italian horror film; it's also a well-sustained exercise in pure mood. Yet less tolerant viewers will be put off by the jerky pacing, which fluctuates between tantalizing dollops of suggestive information, grotesquely beautiful horror sequences, and long stretches of boredom. Hang in there, though -- *Daughter*'s unnerving prologue, set in a 1970 hippy commune, only hints at the escalating series of creepily inspired moments to come.

As noted, *Daughter* is the third feature from the talented Michele Soavi. Soavi has been nobly carrying on an Italian Gothic tradition first begun by director Ricardo Freda (*The Devil's Commandment*), further refined by Mario Bava (*Black Sunday*) and then brought up to date by Dario Argento (*Suspiria*), a tradition whose menacing, dreamlike moods are their most entrancing quality. When it comes to atmosphere there's really no contest -- the Italians remain the undisputed champions of supernatural ambience, hands down.

And *The Devil's Daughter* is drenched in mood. In fact, watching this film becomes a sensual, near-erotic experience, one ably abetted by Raffaele Mertes' baroque cinematography. *Daughter* also boasts a strange Pino Donaggio score and some eldritch, near-*Lovecraftian* production designs by M. Antonello Geleng.

Unfortunately, there's all those pesky defects, too.

The Devil's Daughter is saddled with languid pacing and a ridiculous climax, one that feels hurried, to say the least. Splatter fans will also probably be disappointed by Soavi's relative disuse of the old ultra-violence here, although there are some squirming shots of beetles crawling up people's nostrils (better yet, the world's ugliest stork gets to peck out maggots from a gaping wound in a young man's throat).

Yet even with the tedium, the butt-twitching running time and the lack of gore effects (this is, after all, a Dario Argento production!), *The Devil's Daughter* qualifies as a superior supernatural effort. Phone-answering machine messages from the dead, cisterns to hell, skinned faces, coal-black eye drops, Dada-esque nightmares, avian rapes, malevolent facial shrouds (which suggests someone's been reading M. R. James' classic short story "Oh Whistle And I'll Come To You, My Lad"), even, I swear, an evil rabbit -- it's flourishes like these that set *The Devil's Daughter* well apart from the usual genre pack.

Ones that also make this stupid, illogical extravaganza the year's first important horror import.

The Vanishing (Dutch/French -- 1988) ***1/2. D: George Sluizer. Color, 102 minutes. With: Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, Gene Bervoets, Johanna Der Stege (Fox/Lorber Video)

Two Dutch lovers on holiday in France stop at a roadside rest area. The vivacious Saskia (Johanna Der Stege) leaves the car to buy some refreshments -- and never comes back. Her grief-stricken boyfriend Rex (Gene Bervoets) spends the next three years obsessively trying to solve the mystery of Saskia's abrupt "vanishing." Then Rex is approached by Raymond (Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu), a married, seemingly normal French professor of chemistry. Yet Raymond is anything but normal. And only he

holds the key to Saskia's disappearance.

This spare, well-acted psychological horror film seemed doomed to its own vanishing act after it blew into Los Angeles (in 1990) for a brief and virtually unnoticed theatrical run. I was one of few to catch *The Vanishing* during its initial engagement, though, and a lucky thing, too. Because this moody, French/Dutch co-production happens to be one of the most intelligent, perfectly realized, genuinely frightening thrillers of the past twenty years.

That's quite a claim, no? Yet *The Vanishing* is the sort of production which demands accolades. It's subtle, tight as a tick, and an object lesson in effective low-budget filmmaking. *The Vanishing* further boasts a truly terrifying climax; this is also one of the three greatest case studies of a cinematic sociopath (along with Powell's *Peeping Tom* and Hitchcock's *Psycho*) ever committed to film.

Most importantly, though, *The Vanishing* is the sort of picture about which the less known, the better. Suffice it to say that while it's low-key, it's never boring; that the yellow subtitles are quite readable; that it's being remade, in America, by the same director (with -- blech! -- Kiefer Sutherland); and that this video release is from the same company (Fox-Lorber) which recently gave us Tarkovsky's masterly *Solaris* (in a two-cassette, 167 minute subtitled version, one containing footage not seen during this poetic of classic's original, and dubbed, theatrical release).

Absorbing, horrifying and very, very smart, *The Vanishing* is an icy yet brilliant ride along deceptively smooth surfaces, one whose road is littered with premonitory signposts (such as Saskia's dream of being trapped in a golden egg). And I urge you to study that early moment when the lovers, chugging along in a narrow tunnel, run out of gas.

What follows is a seemingly domestic, even mundane scene. Rex

and Saskia argue. Rex leaves. Rex comes back.

Yet what appears to be a perfectly ordinary moment is actually this exemplary film's secret, guilty heart.

LASERDISC REVIEWS

Let's quickly move on to some recent "Special Edition" releases containing important supplemental material.

Aliens (1986) ***. D: James Cameron. Color, 154 minutes. With: Sigourney Weaver, Carrie Henn, Lance Henriksen, Michael Biehn, Paul Reiser, Bill Paxton, Jenette Goldstein. (Fox Video)

Although I still prefer the original, *Aliens* is an exceedingly well-crafted entertainment; brisk, beautifully designed, relentless. The much-anticipated expanded version of this 1986 blockbuster has finally arrived via Fox Video's four-disc CAV "Special Wide Screen Collector's Edition" -- and it was worth the wait.

Retaining the film's original 1:85:1 aspect ratio, this laserdisc-only version of *Aliens* adds 17 minutes to the original, most notably through two sequences; one touches on Ripley's (Sigourney Weaver) reaction to the death of her fifty-six-year-old daughter, the other details Newt (Carrie Henn) and her family's discovery of the original Geiger-designed spaceship on the fog-shrouded planetoid LV-426.

Overall quality of the transfer is above-average, although some of the footage is (unavoidably? intentionally?) quite grainy. What really makes this special-edition *Aliens* an instant collectible, though, is Side 7's behind-the-scenes supplemental material. Quite simply, this is the most thorough, exhaustive and generally definitive laserdisc supplement available. On any film. Anywhere.

The Devil and Daniel Webster (1941) ***1/2. D: William Dieterle. B&W, 107 minutes. With:

Edward Arnold, Walter Huston, James Craig, Anne Shirley. (The Voyager Company: Criterion Collection)

This classic slice of Americana features a dirt-poor farmer (Craig) who sells his soul to Old Scratch (Huston) and then tries to renege on the deal through the efforts of legendary lawyer Daniel Webster (Arnold). And it's never been an easy film to see. Local television stations don't program it, cable tv never picks it up, and arthouse theaters ignore it (I had to make do with a 16mm screening caught at a local fantasy convention some years back).

That's why Criterion has performed such a worthy service by making *The Devil and Daniel Webster* available on laserdisc again (an earlier, less-complete LD was put out by Embassy a few years back, but featured an inferior, murkier print). What's more, Criterion has added 22 minutes of original *Devil* footage not seen since 1952 (when it was first put out), including the initial seven minutes that introduces the principal characters.

As of this writing, Criterion's is the only restored version of *The Devil and Daniel Webster* available on disc or tape. Quality is variable, since this edition was taken from the sole remaining full-length print (a 16mm one). However, those who wish to savor an engrossing, unjustly neglected fantasy classic should forgive the scratches and scoop up this version right away.

Trivia note: Thomas (*Gone With The Wind*) Mitchell originally played Daniel Webster in this production. But after seventeen weeks of work, Mitchell was injured in an accident. He was then replaced by Edward Arnold -- and nearly the entire film was reshot around him (!).

Fantasia (1940) **** D: Samuel Armstrong ("Toccata and Fugue in D Minor"), Samuel Armstrong ("The Nutcracker Suite"), James Algar ("The Sorcerer's Ap-

prentice"), Bill Roberts/Paul Satterfield ("The Rite of Spring"), Hamilton Luske/Jim Handley/Ford Beebe ("Pastoral Symphony"), Norman Ferguson ("Dance of the Hours"), Wilfred Jackson ("Night on Bald Mountain"/"Ave Maria"). Color, 120 minutes. With: Leopold Stokowski, Mickey Mouse, narrated by Deems Taylor. (Walt Disney Home Video)

By now everyone and Minnie's mother has heard about *Fantasia*'s long-delayed release on tape/laserdisc, so I'll stick to examining the \$89.95 CAV special edition boxed set.

For this amount of money you get a sixteen-page booklet, a Certificate of Authenticity signed by Roy Disney, a limited edition commemorative lithograph, and a bonus disc titled *Fantasia: The Making Of A Masterpiece* (a documentary with some fascinating archival footage which you may have already seen and taped off the Disney Channel). Oh yeah -- you also get a CAV version of *Fantasia* boasting a stunningly restored print. Image quality is simply incredible here; I've dutifully trooped off to every theatrical rerelease of *Fantasia* since I was knee-high to an ovum, yet I've never seen such clarity of detail or richness of color.

A warning, though; this isn't a complete reprint. I distinctly recall a shot during the "Pastoral" sequence of a Black Cupid shining a centaur's hooves, one now missing and apparently cut because of racist overtones. I'm also dismayed that this version of *Fantasia* is apparently our last chance to see this pop masterpiece in its original form; Disney has announced that they now plan to periodically delete old or add new sequences to all subsequent releases of *Fantasia* (not a new idea, by the way; the original souvenir program from the film's 1940 New York premiere noted that "from time to time the order and selection of compositions on this program may be changed.") Now, call me a reactionary old fart, but how in the world do the Disney execs expect the 1940 sequences of this

film to comfortably mesh with contemporary animation? I'm afraid we'll be left with a lumbering cartoon version of *Frankenstein*, one pathetically composed of mismatched parts.

Anyway, having *Fantasia* at home gave me the opportunity to note some previously overlooked details. Like how the aforementioned "Pastoral's" cherubs (read "fairies") were hairdressers -- was this somebody's idea of a joke? And how the same "Pastoral" sequence is simply too long and cutesy, particularly when butted up against the "Dance of the Hours" segment, which spotlights all those lecherous alligators and leaping hippopotamuses. If the revisionists at Disney are serious about fiddling with *Fantasia*, they should cut these two segments -- the film would be better without them.

I'm also now sure that the dinosaur-laden "Rite of Spring," the abstract "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor" and the horrific "Night On Bald Mountain" are the film's greatest sequences. Finally, and what's with all that "naked butt" imagery in *Fantasia*, huh?

Walt Disney must have had an odd fantasy life . . .

RECOMMENDED FILM MAGAZINES — PART 2

Last issue's installment of "Recommended Film Magazines" was only the beginning.

My A-Z listing of those genre-oriented publications most worth your time and money has now grown to such proportions that I'm forced to spread the remainder over the next few columns. Therefore, and since we looked at the letters "A" through "D" last time out, this time we'll examine "E" through "G".

Eyeball: The European Sex & Horror Review (Stephen Thrower, 20 Kintyre Court, Rew Park Road, Brixton Hill, London, SW2 4DY, England)

This intelligent English Euro-

trash treat is an impressively professional production. Distinguished by its roster of name-brand critics (Kim Newman, Tim Lucas, Ramsey Campbell) and articles on the likes of Alejandro Jodorowsky, Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci, *Eyeball*'s primary obsessions are exploitation and Italian horror films. Edited by a former contributor to *Shock Xpress*; order a copy today to discover "Why Those Strange Drops Of Blood on the Body Of Jennifer?"

Fangoria (Starlog Communications Inc., 475 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10016, 212-689-2830).

This over-ten-years old, professionally published, hard-core gore/horror film effort generates a lot of negative ink in the fanzine press. The primary objection seems to be what some see as *Fangoria*'s "pressbook" mentality; *Fango*'s articles are accused of being nothing more than glowing puff-pieces, ones which avoid controversy, always recommend the production in question, and generally exhibit an alarming resemblance to those promotional handouts called studio presskits.

While a smidgen of truth does lie in the foregoing accusations, such criticisms ignore the simple fact that *Fangoria* is at the mercy of both time and the studio publicity departments. After all, *Fango*'s articles are usually written *before* a film wraps principal photography, and no one really knows what a film's going to be like until *after* it's released. And you can be damn sure that journalists visiting a film set are closely monitored; in fact, it's no secret that writers visiting sets are subtly (or not so subtly) encouraged to talk to only those production people whom a studio feels will shine the best possible light on a particular motion picture.

Attacks on *Fangoria* also conveniently ignore the magazine's genuine enthusiasm for gore films as well as the solid information and, yes, *criticism* to be routinely found within its pages. I've particularly liked writer Tom Weaver's ongoing series of in-

terviews with 1950's horror film makers/stars; Bill KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES! Warren's on-set reports are commendable too, since Bill frequently tries to place the film he's currently covering within a broader historical context. Other sturdy *Fango*-related features include its "Dr. Cyclops" video criticism column, the "Nightmare Library" book reviews, "Monster Invasion's" news of upcoming genre releases, and the "Video Chopping List," which lists what genre titles are being released on what label each month.

At this point I should insert the fact that part of my good will towards this publication stems from the fact that I wrote for *Fangoria* during its first two years of publication. This was before I stopped writing about the film industry and started working in it; way back in the early Eighties, in fact, when Uncle Bob Martin was *Fango*'s sardonic editor-in-chief. So I must confess to a certain nostalgic soft spot in my heart *re Fango* . . . plus a certain amount of good will towards present *Fangoria* editor Tony Timpone. Tony's always been cheerful, helpful and professional to me, particularly during those years when I was a hired gun doing specialized promotions for the studios. Anyway, as far as I'm concerned, Timpone's one of the good guys.

On the other hand, before this starts to sound like I'm on the *Fango* payroll, let me hasten to add that this publication *isn't* my favorite horror film magazine (someday I'll let you know what *is* . . . when I decide myself). As I've said, those puff-piece criticisms do have a ring of truth, although I certainly sympathize with the political realities which produce them in the first place. Furthermore, I find that the manner in which *Fangoria* slants its contents towards the mid-teen male teenager severely limits this mag's possibilities. Of course, that mid-teen male is the gore film's primary audience in the first place . . .

Anyway, this constant *Fango*-

bashing really annoys me. All I know is that I read the damn thing every month and usually find something to like; in fact I've used back issues to research my upcoming "best of" book *Blood and Rockets: The 500 Best Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Films on Videotape*. Besides, I suspect the main reason *Fangoria* arouses this abuse is professional jealousy; it's easily the largest, most successful publication of its kind, with over 100,000 subscribers.

And that's a lot of gorehounds.

Fatal Visions (Michael Helms, P.O. Box 133, Northcote Victoria 3070 Australia)

My favorite Australian filmzine, *Fatal Visions* is an excellent, glossy, large-size publication covering action, sexploitation, science fiction, martial arts, Chinese horror, sleaze and just about any other junk genre you can think of. Well-written and wry, with a sprinkling of real-life horrors; i.e., an interview with incarcerated "Sex Beast" mass-murderer Gerard John Schaefer. *Fatal Visions* reminds me of a cross between *Re/Search* and *Shock Xpress*; that's a potent combination. Lots of video, film and book reviews, too -- a recent issue profiled Chinese director Chu Yuen. A sample issue will cost you \$6.00, American.

Filmfax: The Magazine Of Unusual Film and Television (Michael Stein and Sharon Williams, P.O. Box 1900, Evanston IL 60204.)

Essentially a professional nostalgia magazine, *Filmfax* proves you can still squeeze interesting copy out of what should be overexposed territory by letting enthusiastic writers root around in lesser-known areas of entertainment history. Typically concerning itself with the earlier eras of film and television production, *Filmfax* has a particular emphasis on 1950's genre pictures; in this manner it resembles the old *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, as well as the more recent *Midnight Mar-*

quee.

But *Filmfax* has also featured articles on such cathode classics as *Thriller* and career profiles on *Twin Peaks* fave Russ Tamblyn. And the writing staff is good; regular contributions by media pros like David J. Hogan and Tom Weaver definitely help.

Where *Filmfax* really shines, however, is in its detailed information on films which should have long ago been strip-mined of further information. For example, I really enjoyed issue #25's profile of the 3-D cult classic *The Mask*; I've also liked the long chats with such obscure B-actors as Richard Derr, Rose Hobart and Dorothy Lee. Another *Filmfax* plus is its numerous ads for video mail-order companies specializing in all manner of taped esoterica; here's a warehouse for those bootleg tapes we were talking about earlier.

On the down side, *Filmfax* is the only prozine I can think of whose ink comes off on your fingers. Still, this shouldn't lessen your enjoyment of "theme" issues like #28, which was an "All Exploitation" one. Filled with columns examining collectible records, small press film books and unusual video releases, *Filmfax* does a good job of bringing its particular brand of filmic nostalgia into the mainstream market. Baby boomers looking to reexperience what they loved as kids need search no further than Mike Stein and Sharon William's affectionate, paper-based time machine.

Film Threat (Christian Gore, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills CA 90210).

Film Threat originally began (in February 1985) as a student newsletter published at Detroit's Wayne State University. As editor Chris Gore writes on page six of the new *Film Threat* (Issue 1 November 1991), "I started *Film Threat* because I wanted to write about the movies I liked that never seemed to get any press . . . The first issue . . . was six

pages of Xeroxed punk ravings about how bad contemporary films were."

Film Threat went on to become a much-expanded, quality filmzine that spent the next five years enlarging on its initial rant. In the process it became (next to Rick Sullivan's *Gore Gazette*) America's most wickedly funny underground fanzine. Drenched in attitude, *Film Threat* routinely insulted its readership, praised big tits and guzzled gallons of beer while almost off-handedly producing a lively, stingingly acerbic publication detailing the latest independent efforts of underground luminaries like Lydia Lunch and R. Kern.

Now *Film Threat* has mutated into the kind of slick, all-color publication your mother could conceivably pick up at her local supermarket. And while this mag has clearly decided to forsake its underground roots to go wallowing in the commercial mainstream, the transition hasn't muzzled its previously vicious bite.

For instance, Issue #1 of the new-style *Threat* offered an article on "the oddly desperate, ill-fated and lonely" world of contemporary child stars, one complete with a surprisingly sincere, cautionary open letter to *Home Alone*'s megakid Macaulay Culkin. Another piece was titled "The Frigid 50: The Coldest People In Hollywood" (celebrities who are not hot; Andrew Dice Clay, Dan Akroyd, Peter Boddanovich . . .). There was also a preview of *Swirlie*, a gangster film about a man made out of vanilla ice cream.

Yet the best thing about the new, improved, more mainstream *Film Threat* remains its (downscaled) support of those independent motion pictures that haven't a snowball's chance in hell of making it into *Entertainment Weekly*. We're talking pictures like German director Jorg Nekromantik Buttigereit's newest release *Der Todersking* (*The Death King*), or Frank Graw's terrific little short *Red and Rosy*, which concerns adrenaline-addicted drag racers and some truly jaw-dropping

monsters. Incidentally, you can order these films directly from *Film Threat* itself; they have their own mail-order company.

Chris Gore may be too young to remember this, but *Film Threat* reminds me of the earliest (and best) issues of *The National Lampoon* — it has that same irreverent mix of smarts and bad taste. Which means that it can fall down just as often as it sprints. Witness, for example, the recent, ill-conceived *Film Threat Video Guide* attack on goremeister Chas. Balun.

Yet at its best, *Film Threat* performs a valuable service. Like the "Underground" column in *Film Threat*'s November 1991 issue says, "If you think the latest David Lynch or Tim Burton film represents the cutting edge, THINK AGAIN!"

Film Threat Video Guide
(Editor: David E. Williams. P.O. Box 3170, Los Angeles CA 90078-3170. 818-848-8971)

This *Film Threat* spin-off is a quarterly publication "interested in underground videos, direct to video releases and highly unusual films." In other words, *Film Threat Video Guide* continues the old *Film Threat* agenda, now that the latter publication has gone national and vents its spleen on more commercial theatrical releases.

FTVG has lots of rated capsule reviews for such great independent films as the (mucho recommended!) Super-8 zombie epic *The Dead Next Door*. There's also the expected "fuck you" *Film Threat* attitude mixed in with interviews, articles, and nasty gossip. One recent story (which you won't be hearing on *Entertainment Tonight*) detailed how the FBI became involved in a misinformed search for a purported snuff film called *Guinea Pig*. In reality, this "movie" was an unnervingly convincing -- but utterly fake -- Japanese gore video, one that sprang from Japan's disturbingly fascinating sub-genre of sex n' violence efforts called *pinku eiga*, or "pink films".

Like *Film Threat*, the *Film*

Threat Video Guide sells most of its reviewed films through its own mail-order division. Therefore, this 'zine is a "must buy" for those interested in the ever-growing venues of independent/alternative film and video production.

Gore Gazette (Rick Sullivan, 469 Hazel Street, Clifton New Jersey 07011)

"TEN FUCKING YEARS & STILL MAKING ENEMIES!" crowded the cover of *Gore Gazette* #103. Well... yeah, on both counts.

Dedicated to the besotted wonders of scum cinema, the decade-old *Gore Gazette* is the best sleaze zine currently on the market. Although it's only about twelve xeroxed-and-stapled pages long, the *Gazette* manages to pack enough outrageous, enthusiastic and offensive information on marginal films like *Kill Line* and *The Unbom* to make each issue a testicle-tickling treat. Editor Rick Sullivan knows his genre, and he isn't afraid to kick ass, either; issue 105 featured a litigious variation on the *Terminator 2* one-sheet as well as a full-frontal assault on *Scarephanalia* editor Michael Gingold.

Rowdy and committed, the *Gore Gazette* picks up the sleaze mantle once worn by Bill Landis' incredible (and extinct) *Slazoid Express* and runs with it. Yet the funniest thing about this publication is that you can find the *Gore Gazette* at your local Tower Records store (!). That bushy-beavered babe on a recent *Gore* cover, though, has me wondering just how long you'll be able to find it there . . .

Gorezone (Starlog Communications Inc., 475 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. 212-689-2830).

A splatter-film prozine much like its sister publication *Fangoria*, *Gorezone* is notable for three things.

One is its continuing "how to" series on special effects makeup titled "Makeup FX Lab," with clear-cut advice on how to create your own

monsters from such makeup maestros as John Caglione and the crew of KNB EFX.

The second distinguishing *Gorezone* characteristic was Tim Lucas' recently discontinued *Video Watchdog* column. While it lasted, Tim's definitive effort was essential reading for the hard-core home video fanatic; you'll now have to satisfy your tape cravings with Lucas' equally excellent *Video Watchdog* fanzine, which I'll cover in an upcoming ish.

The third reason to pick up *Gorezone* is Stephen R. Bissette's "... With My Eyes Peeled" column. Steve makes a point of examining off-beat films seldom encountered by the typical genre fan, such as made-for-television horror films or *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren's nightmarish 1943 experimental short. Bissette is evolving into a first-rate genre critic, by the way; he's definitely someone to watch.

Otherwise, *Gorezone* is the usual *Fango* collection of interviews, fold-out posters and ultra-bloody film stills.

That's about all for this installment. In closing, I'd like to beat my greying but still virile chest and proclaim that you can find an interesting interview with me in Stanley Wiater's recent book *Dark Visions: Conversations with the Masters of the Horror Film* (Avon Books, 1992). Although the topics Stan quizzes me on are a bit outdated (for instance, I haven't done any film or television publicity for years, focused as I am on the production side of things) overall the book's a good effort. Buy a copy and make Stan rich.

I also pop up in *Cult: Horror Writers On Horror Film* (Berkley

Con't on
page 103

A BARGAIN AT ANY COST

F. J. MATOZZO

FRANCIS J. MATOZZO is quickly becoming a writer to watch in the field of dark fantasy, with impressive showings in *Pulphouse* and both of Tom Monteleone's *Borderlands* anthologies. His *Borderlands II* novelette, "Breeding Ground" is as fine a story as I've read lately. The following tale is Matozzo's first appearance in *Cemetery Dance*.

The thing was done. Once set in motion, it was out of her hands.

She leaves early, before the steaming August heat has a chance to burn off the last layer of cooler air. The Flea Market opens at 8:00 a.m. and she knows from experience that by noon everything worthwhile will be bought -- especially on a Friday.

Driving with fierce conviction down the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Lucy Terranova deftly maneuvers her metallic gray sports car in the early rush hour traffic. Marvin bought her the car a year ago as an act of contrition for his long bout with alcoholism. It was the right gesture at the right moment -- the one that convinced her, finally, that she had to give up Lee.

Approaching the toll booth, she reaches into the change cup on the seat next to her, fingers scrabbling for ninety-five cents. She glances at her watch . . . 7:45 . . . time enough to reach the Market by opening, shop for three hours, have lunch, then make her call at 12:30.

Precisely 12:30.

The man on the phone had been quite specific about that.

She drove up to the booth, tossing her change into the wire basket that juts out like a hungry mouth. As the coins rattle down she suddenly panics and tears open her purse, afraid that she's forgotten the phone number. But there it is, written on the back of a coupon book. She makes a mental note to tear the page off afterward -- to trash the entire book would be a waste. Thinking of money, she reaches beneath her car seat and feels for the envelope. She knows it's there, of course -- she can feel its bulky presence under her as she drives. But touching it with her fingers provides an added reassurance.

A car horn blares behind her. Startled, she looks up into the rear-view mirror at the gesticulating image of an impatient driver. "Sorry," she murmurs, gunning the car. She cuts across two lanes and heads north for Jersey.

The Flea Market covers almost three acres of

paved lots. Rows of tables placed in symmetrical lines, cover the black expanse of asphalt with a glittering brigade of wares. Between these rows -- barely wide enough for two people to walk side-by-side -- the crowds of shoppers move like a stream of ants. By 9:00 a.m. there are over a thousand people crammed into the lot.

The majority of the shoppers are middle-age women. Swift but not reckless, they calculate value, price and need with a practiced economy of motion. There is no frenzied rush to horde items, no crude displays of petulance at having lost out on a bargain. There is a timeless quality to their shopping -- what's not found one day will be found the next day, or next week. The women move as if they know this in their bones. They announce this in the tilt of their bodies, in the way they inspect items with their hands and the even tone of their voices when they bargain with the vendors. The few men at the market are different. Most of them are older, retired, meandering behind their spouses like lazy puppies.

The tables are laden with bounty: clothing, jewelry, VCRs, records, tapes, perfumes, stationary. Art-work surrounds one table -- the ubiquitous black velvet Elvises; another table buckles under the weight of old magazines. Vintage cellophane-wrapped *Playboys*. A single table of Coca-Cola paraphernalia. Plastic-ware, Rubbermaid goods, gadgets, athletic equipment, gardening tools, auto accessories, glassware. A bazaar of American culture baking under the sweltering sun.

By 10:00 a.m. the heat from the asphalt is rising up through the soles of Lucy's sneakers, adding to her growing sense of discomfort. She is dressed in white shorts and a pink, sleeveless top. A thin sheen of perspiration makes her tan skin look golden. She thinks of Lee and how profusely he used to sweat when they made love. Then shakes her head, dismissing the thought.

She is moving slower than normal, irritated that she has made only a single purchase -- a hundred percent wool sweater for her fifteen-year-old daughter. She paid twelve dollars for it, but isn't sure she likes the color, or that she couldn't have bought it cheaper. She fully expected shopping to occupy her conscience. She thought it would push out the ugliness -- the guilt and nameless dread -- but she is unable to concentrate. She keeps looking at her watch, the hands moving inexorably forward. *When will it happen?*

She walks up and down each row of tables. On one she finds tube socks, ideal for her seventeen-year-old son

who plays basketball, but the prices are too high. On another table she sifts through endless stacks of T-shirts -- three for five dollars -- yet she can't decide what to buy. All of them look fine, and none of them.

Relax, relax, why should you feel guilty? His fault, not yours.

Instantly an image of Lee springs to mind. He is naked, sitting on the edge of the motel bed, embarrassed by his inability to achieve an erection. It is their first rendezvous and he is nervous, angry at himself, a little boy unable to please. She loves him that moment with an intensity that scalds her heart.

She stalks over to a table of housewares, determined to clear her mind. Immediately, a brass shower massager catches her eye. Troubled with back problems since her last pregnancy, she had always wanted a massager -- the image of warm water cascading on her shoulders and back with modulated pressure actually brings a hint of a smile to her lips.

Once, she had showered with Lee.

"Now this is a real bargain," says the vendor, a young man with dirty blond hair. "Only thirty dollars."

Lucy nods, picks up the item, tests its weight. "It's nice, but thirty dollars seems like a lot."

"Solid brass, ma'am."

"But there's a scratch here."

"Where?"

"Here."

She points to the underside of the elongated nozzle where a narrow line appears. *Got you now.*

"You won't even see that when you install it."

"But it's there, isn't it?"

The young man shakes his head, resigned. "Right, well . . . I'll knock a couple dollars off."

"How about ten dollars?"

He laughs at her. "It's scratched, lady, not broken. Twenty-eight dollars sounds about right."

She debates a moment, then smiles softly, capturing him with her deep brown eyes. She is forty-five years old, a pound or two overweight, but she is still attractive enough to turn their heads. She brushes back a strand of her long brown hair. "It's really nice, you know. How about twenty-five?"

The vendor holds up his arms in mock defeat. "Sold! For twenty-five dollars."

She quickly gives him the money. He bags the merchandise and hands it back to her with a lopsided grin. "Enjoy," he says.

The glow of achievement she feels at saving five dollars dissipates quickly at lunch. She sits in a booth in the diner across the street from the market. Ordering only a light salad and a glass of iced tea, she finds her stomach cannot tolerate either. She turns the pages of a fashion magazine, pausing to check the time. The watch is another gift from Marvin -- her recent twenty-third

anniversary gift. Marvin credits her for saving him from alcohol, and by extension his career and his marriage. What he doesn't know is that she would have left him for Lee . . . if Lee could have supported her.

But Lee always did have too much baggage: a wife he'd have to pay alimony, two small children, debt galore. He was a writer of children's books, but the money he earned could barely pay his own bills let alone take care of *her* needs. Marvin, a senior partner in a law firm, earned \$85,000 a year. Still, if he hadn't been able to stop his drinking . . . who knows?

It wasn't like Lee was a bad person. When Marvin was at his worst -- incoherent every night, about to lose his position in the firm, cold and detached -- she thanked God for Lee's presence. He held her up through the bad times with his gentle love, his kindness and attention. Sexually, he awakened feelings in her that she had never known existed. She did love him, then . . . but Marvin changed for the better.

And Lee could not afford her.

"Why do you want to continue this?" she shouted at him at the end. *"If Marvin finds out I'm out on the street and you can't take care of me! I'm not going back to tearing napkins in half!"*

That was it, she thought, gathering the bill from the waitress. For all his understanding ways, Lee would never know what it was like to grow up poor and wanting. Abandoned by her father when she was five-years-old, Lucy grew up watching her mother slave to make ends meet. Fifty hours a week at the knitting factory was barely enough to keep milk and bread on the table. Living in a squalid two room apartment, an only child, she had to fight and scrape for the most basic needs. When her mother wasn't exhausted from the grueling work week, she was drowning in an ocean of self-pity and depression. At the age of sixteen, Lucy quit high school and worked full-time as a sales clerk to help with the bills. Two years later she met Marvin, who was halfway through law school. She fell passionately in love, clinging to the emotional and financial security he offered. It all seemed so long ago, so distant in time, yet the days of poverty lived in the present. She carried them with her like scars.

She feels the anger returning, a wild fury that consumes her being. Lee, the bastard, would have her go back to those times. With his infantile threats to reveal their affair to Marvin, he holds her fate in his hands . . . *no way I'm going back to that . . .*

She looks at her watch for the hundredth time. 12:15. She pays her bill, leaves the diner and camps out in the phone booth outside. Standing there, with the door closed, pretending that she's on the phone so no one else will use it, she feels like a wilting rose in a greenhouse. Sweat drips from every pore in her body. She cracks the door open to let some air in. Across the street The Flea Market is packing up for the day. The vendors load their vans and station wagons with unsold wares, while the cars



KLOEDORN/MARVEL

of the shoppers, glittering in the sunlight, file out from the parking lot.

A wild screeching slices the humidity. The noise comes from the front of a bank on the corner opposite the diner. A mock Georgian facade, complete with massive white pillars, supports a dome-shaped arbor over the entrance. At the crest of one of the pillars, on a narrow ledge, two shrieking blackbirds angrily flail their wings, engaged in some primitive territorial battle.

12:30.

Her quarter falls into the slot with a sickening click. There is a single ring, then the hollow voice of the operator: "Please deposit thirty-five cents for the next three minutes."

The coins are slippery in her hands. She has a pounding in her head and her back aches. Breathing heavily, she waits.

He picks up on the other end, his voice so familiar that it astonishes her -- it's as if she's talked to this man her entire life.

He relates the details quickly, without wasted words. She has no time for questions, even if she wanted to ask them. At the end he re-negotiates their contract in her favor. He congratulates her good fortune, a trace of

sarcasm in his voice. Must be your lucky day. Then summarily dismisses that they have ever talked. You don't know me. Goodbye.

She hangs up the phone and reels out of the booth. She tries to make it to her car and fails. Veering off to a clump of weeds she drops to her knees and regurgitates. The vicious heat of the sun beats down on her arched neck. She empties her stomach of stale coffee and bits of lettuce. Her nose is runny and tears mingle with mascara and sweat. She tastes everything, swallows, vomits again. When the heaving convulsions stop she gathers herself and staggers to the car. Slumping behind the wheel, she turns on the air-conditioning.

"He did our work for us. Saved you some money. We only charge half price for suicides."

She looks into the rear-view mirror and sees a pale, hollow face with nightmarish streaks of running make-up. Quickly, she reapplies lipstick, eye-shadow, blush.

The \$5,000, her other half of the payment, still waits beneath her car seat. If she hurries, she can redeposit the money before the bank closes.

-- CD



TYSON BLUE

NEEDFUL KINGS & OTHER THINGS

Last year, Stephen King came to the rescue of Bangor's sports community by donating the funds to build a Little League field. This year, King and his wife, Tabitha, bailed out the ailing swimming and diving programs of their alma mater, the University of Maine at Orono. The school's programs had lost their varsity status as part of the university's \$188,650 athletic budget cuts for 1992-93. Upon learning of this, the Kings donated the \$30,000 needed to maintain the programs' varsity status, citing what King called "a division between the have sports, like baseball, basketball, football and hockey, and the have-nots, like swimming, field hockey, and golf" as a reason for their actions.

In a recent catalogue, the *Overlook Connection's* Dave Hinchberger revealed some plot details of King's next novel, *Gerald's Game*, which have been confirmed by sources at Viking. The novel tells the story of a woman whose husband dies during a kinky sex game, leaving her handcuffed to a bed with a corpse in an isolated house, with no one knowing she's there, etc. This basic device, reminiscent of several earlier novels, particularly *Misery* and *Cujo*, is classic King. The novel, which is shorter than *Needful Things*, is expected in

bookstores by early June 1992, and will be published ahead of *Dolores Claiborne*, the last novel included in the notorious four-book deal of a few years back.

At the moment, King is busy writing the script for *The Stand*, which will air as a mini-series on ABC. There is no projected broadcast date for this project -- hell, they're just in the writing stages now! -- but as soon as we have more information, you'll be the first to know.

King's first major interview in some time appeared in the March 1992 issue of *Writer's Digest*. Interviewed by W. C. Stroby, King talks about his writing habits, how his ideas and novels develop -- but *not* where he gets them -- and talks a bit about *Gerald's Game*, without revealing any plot details. There are also new insights into how he feels about working with editors who may be afraid to tamper with his work, when to listen to critics (more often than you might think) and numerous other aspects of writing. Because of the venue -- a technical magazine aimed at people who want to write -- the interview touches on issues pertinent to writers and writing, thus covering ground most King interviews ignore. This one is worth seeking out.

In May, King will be in atten-

dance at the annual ABA (American Booksellers Association) meeting in New York. As a part of the goings-on, King will contribute his talents as a guitarist to a new musical group, "The Rock-Bottom Remainders," who will perform at the meeting. Joining King in *The Remainders* are well-known writer-musicians including writer Amy Tan, columnist Dave Berry, *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, Robert Kingsolver, Ted Bartemus, Robert Fulghum, Michael Dorris, Louise Erdrich, Ridley Pearson and Tomie DePaola. Proceeds from the event will go to benefit the Right-to-Rock Network, a First Amendment rights group, as well as a literacy project yet to be named. Sadly, no plans have been announced for a benefit CD, video and tour at this time.

In January, Penguin-HighBridge released *The Dark Tower III: The Waste Lands*, an unabridged audio reading which is, like the audio versions of the two previous *Dark Tower* novels, read by King, except for the "Charlie the Choo-Choo" sequence, which is read by an unidentified woman. The reading is basically unadorned, except for occasional music composed by Eve Beglarian, and the occasional sound effect.

King seems to be settling comfortably into the role of reader in this, his fourth unabridged reading. The reading is 18 hours in length, presented on 12 cassettes and retailing for \$34.95. As reported previously, there will not be a signed limited edition of the audio.

The only bad thing about *The Waste Lands* on audio is the packaging, which is truly awful. The tapes are stacked one above the other in six slipcases, all of which are set into an open-ended box. I found that the box doesn't hold the slipcases tightly, and every time you move it, the tapes fall out. I'd much rather have seen it come out in the format used for *Four Past Midnight* and *Needful Things*.

In other TV news, last summer's CBS mini-series, *Stephen King's Golden Years*, was released on videocassette in April, with additional material to wrap the series up. Sources at King's office report that the ending was written by Mick Garris, who helmed *Sleepwalkers*, an April release from Columbia. This column is being written in March, so we cannot give you a review of the film.

In March, New Line Cinema released *The Lawnmower Man*, a film bearing virtually no resemblance to the short story from which it takes its name, starring Pierce Brosnan and Jeff Fahey. The story for the film concerns an experiment to artificially enhance the intelligence of a near-moronic yardman, with bizarre results. Although the film had not opened by our deadline, the film appeared to combine elements of such films as *Charly*, *Mindscape*, and *Tron*, with what success we don't as yet know. However, early reviews of the film have been positive, and one source at King's office who had seen the film at an early screening reported that it "felt like . . . a trip to Epcot."

What many people don't know is that this is the second film version of "The Lawnmower Man." The first version was made several years back as a student film, shot on a very

limited budget. The film stuck very closely to King's original story, and featured one of the most obviously-faked cloven hooves I've run across in recent memory, but it had a lot of heart. The film was shown at Horrorfest '89 in Estes Park, Colorado, but has not been made available on video so far as I know.

Also on the motion picture front, financial troubles at Orion Pictures have placed the release of the George Romero version of King's *The Dark Half* on hold. The film stars Timothy Hutton in a dual role as both Thad Beaumont and George Stark, along with Amy Madigan.

As mentioned in our exclusive interview with him elsewhere in this issue, Dean R. Koontz is currently hard at work on a new novel. Originally entitled *Split Second*, the latest word from Dean's office is that the novel is now called *Dragon Tears*. We'll tell you a bit more about that as its release date nears.

In the meantime, Koontz's current novel, *Hideaway*, is, at this writing, in the top spot on the bestseller lists, having unseated *Scarlett* from that lofty perch. For an inside look at some of the creative process behind that novel, see the aforementioned interview, which will also appear in my new book, *Observations From The Terminator*, available from Starmont House.

In addition, an unabridged audio edition of both *Hideaway* and *Cold Fire* is available from The Reader's Chair, 860 Chappell Road, Hollister, CA 95023, for \$39.95. Both novels are read by Michael Hanson and Carol Cowan, and are packaged in sturdy bookshelf cases similar to those used for videotapes. The readings and the quality of the packaging are both far above average and highly recommended.

Of special note: the audio version of *Hideaway* features an exclusive conversation with Koontz, covering a number of diverse topics. This rare chance to hear the author speak is worth the purchase price all

by itself.

Plans are also afoot for the small press Charnel House to release a deluxe edition of Koontz's classic novel *Beastchild*.

Alan Rodger's latest novel, *Night*, although not as enthralling as its predecessor, *Fire*, is nevertheless an intriguing 439-page chase novel, as a young man who has become the keeper of the True Cross must elude and escape his eternal adversary, the Bleeding Man, in a trek across the United States and into strange realms not quite of this earth. The story is well-told and fast-paced, and reveals Rodgers' familiarity with the Southeast. One section in the middle echoes the worst parts of Peter Straub's *Shadowland*, a novel I loathed, but that is more than made up for by a delightfully erotic interval early on in the novel where the protagonist recalls a primal sexual encounter. Give this one a try.

F. Paul Wilson's *Sibs* is a fine novel, easily the best novel of his I have read to date. This Dark Harvest hardcover is about a woman exploring the mysterious death of her twin sister, who has fallen or jumped to her death from a hotel window while dressed like a hooker.

It is a journey which will take her into a maze of bizarre sex, mental projection, psychotherapy, and beyond. She is helped by her former boyfriend, a police officer who has never really gotten over her.

Along the way, Wilson unveils as slimy a villain as you'll run across in years, but I'll not tell you more than that, since unravelling the tangled skein of this novel is half the fun of reading it. Fortunately, Wilson plays fair with his readers as well, offering clues along the way. *Sibs* functions well as a mystery, a thriller, and a horror novel, and should appeal to fans of any or all these genres.

J.N. Williamson and Maclay Publishing continue a fine tradition with *Masques IV*, as the ongoing

showcase for "all-new stories of horror and the supernatural" returns to its original home. These anthos have always gotten high marks, and this is no exception. The only clinker for me was Rex Miller's "Untitled Still Life With Infinity Perspective." Although I've enjoyed his short stories in the past, this science fiction-tinged effort just didn't grab me at all. Perhaps the most surprising contributor to this go-round (the roster includes Ed Gorman, a superb Gahan Wilson story, Gary Brandner, Ray Russell, Kathryn Ptacek and many more) is Steve Allen, whose classic "The Secret" rounds out the volume. Also outstanding is Dan Simmons' "My Private Memoirs of the Hoffer Stigmata Pandemic," in which our personal foibles and faults are made unmistakably, irrefutably manifest by a strange new disease.

But the jewel in *Masques IV*'s crown has to go to Rick Hautala's "Sources of the Nile." Once read, you will never forget it -- no matter how much you might want to -- and you'll never eat a grape again!

The book is available in two formats. There is a plain trade hardcover with black board cloth covers featuring the traditional "masques" logo from the first book stamped in silver on the front, retailing for \$19.95. \$49.00 gets you the deluxe 750-copy limited edition, signed by the contributors.

New on the mystery scene is *Kiss*, the latest 87th Precinct mystery from Ed McBain. These novels have always defined the police procedural genre, and this latest addition is no exception. Steve Carella of the 87th must attend the trial of the man accused of murdering his father (this happened in last year's *Widows*), while at the same time trying to solve the murder of a man found hanged and shot in the back of the head in the basement of a building.

At the same time, the 87th is investigating a woman's claim that the dead man had tried to kill her, as is a mysterious Chicago private eye

hired by the woman's husband to protect her. How all of these seemingly unrelated threads tie together is something you'll have to find out for yourselves.

Kiss continues the interweaving of plotlines from previous novels to give the series a sense of continuity, a technique borrowed by *Hill Street Blues*, a series very similar in concept to the 87th novels. The McBain trademarks of spare prose, realistic dialogue and characterization and absolutely authentic police-work are all present here in a novel not to be missed.

Last year, John Grisham hit paydirt with his second novel, *The Firm*, inventing a new subgenre, the legal thriller, and at the same time delivering a tightly-paced book which spent an impressive 47 weeks on the bestseller lists. Now, he's back with *The Pelican Brief*, to see if lightning can strike twice.

The novel begins with the murder of two Supreme Court justices, giving the President an opportunity to load the court with conservatives. The novel's heroine, an ambitious law student, uncovers a case on the Court docket which might justify such a drastic move in order to sway the Court's opinion, and she summarizes her research in a brief, nicknamed "the pelican brief" because the case involves industrial action which would destroy the habitat of a particular breed of pelican.

When the brief crosses the desk of the parties responsible for the murders, she suddenly finds herself forced to go on the run, trying to stay alive until the right people can be alerted to the brief's contents, save her life and avert a miscarriage of justice at the very pinnacle of the justice system.

As with *The Firm*, Grisham's skill as a writer keeps the plot moving along quickly enough that the improbabilities in the story do not bother the reader. The basic idea of an ambitious young attorney forced by circumstances to go on the run is

quite similar to the basic formula of his last novel, and serves him as well here.

Grisham is a much better writer and storyteller than the vastly-overrated Scott Turow, and he recently gave up the practice of law entirely to write full time. If his next few novels continue to be as fast-paced and entertaining as the last two, then the future is bright both for him and for those of us who read his books.

Former police officer turned novelist Joseph Wambaugh is back with *Fugitive Nights*, a new novel set in the desert country surrounding Palm Springs, a region he has fictionally dallied in a time or two in the past, most recently in his last novel, 1990's *The Golden Orange*.

A mysterious bald man lands a plane at a small airport, ambushes a deputy in a bathroom and disappears into the desert. As a maverick cop looking for a promotion tries to find out who the man is and what his mission might be, he becomes entangled with a fascinating female private eye and her partner, a recently retired cop.

The novel is full of suspense and interesting twists, enlivened by Wambaugh's wry and authentic cop humor, as well as solid characterization through an examination of the motivations driving his heroes to do what they do. This is doubtless a product of his stint in police work. The novel is currently riding in the Top Ten at this writing, and comes highly recommended.

I'd also like to add my two cents to the swelling praise for Dark Harvest's mystery anthology, *Invitation to Murder*. Edited by Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg, the antho gives each of its eighteen contributors one jumping-off point: a woman found dead in her apartment. The diversity of the directions in which one can go from that start is truly amazing. One or two of these stories are science fictional in set-

ting. Contributors include Rex Miller, Andrew Vachas, Gary Brandner, William F. Nolan, and my personal favorite of the lot, Richard Laymon's title story.

The only story here which I really didn't like was, again, Rex Miller's science fiction-tinged story. I don't know what it is, but when Miller or Dan Simmons tackle science fiction tales, the results just leave me cold for some reason. But that does little to interfere with my enjoyment of this otherwise fine collection of stories, and it comes very highly recommended.

**

Dell's Abyss imprint continues its fine line of innovative horror novels with *Deathgrip*, a new novel by Brian Hodge. The novel concerns a young radio deejay who discovers one fine day that he has the power to heal sick people with a touch. At about the same time, a famous televangelist is finding that he lacks the same ability, needed to save his wife from a coma into which she has lapsed following a tumble down a staircase following a domestic squabble.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out where this story is heading. But along the way, Hodge

delivers some fine storytelling, solid characterization and more than one genuine surprise. One particularly effective scene comes early on in the novel, when the young deejay wanders through a hospital late at night, healing everyone he comes in contact with. There is a quiet simplicity to this scene which is hard to get out of mind once read.

Old readers or viewers of *The Exorcist* will be interested to find an old friend lurking in these pages as well . . .

And on that, we'll leave you for this time. Stay well, be happy, and read some of this stuff.

••• BETTS BOOKSTORE •••

SERVING BANGOR AND SURROUNDS SINCE 1938

26 Main Street • Bangor, Maine 04401 • (207) 947-7052

ATTENTION STEPHEN KING FANS

We are pleased to announce that we have obtained all the available back issues of *CASTLE ROCK* and are now offering them for sale on a first come, first serve basis. Issues Volume 1 #1 - Volume 1 #6 are sold out but most others are still available in limited quantities. All issues are priced at \$5.00 each with a 5 issue minimum. Please add a flat \$2.00 for shipping charges.

Betts Bookstore also has a very limited supply of Stephen King Tee-shirts imported from Denmark. Size large and x-large only at \$15.95 each plus \$2.50 shipping.

We stock all Stephen King books in hardcover and paperback including limited editions, signed books, French language (check out the artwork on the cover of these!), and are taking orders for *Gerald's Game* which we will have June 29th.

For a complete list of available Stephen King items please send a long a SASE with two stamps.



OPEN MON - FRI 7:30 - 6:00 SAT 9:00 - 5:00 SUN 9:00 - 4:00



A novel excerpt from DEATHGRIP

BRIAN HODGE

Deathgrip, due for release in May from Dell/Abyss, is an intimately epic odyssey to the beginnings of human myth and spirituality. It chronicles the life of a young man named Paul Handler, who, after manifesting the ability to heal disease and injury, is exploited and manipulated by corrupt televangelist Donny Dawson.

In this scene, Florida-based supermarket tabloid journalists Mike and Ramon have arrived at the Oklahoma City headquarters of Dawson's empire on the eve of a live telecast. And at the urgings of Dawson's convalescent wife Amanda — who is hoping desperately to save Paul from himself and others — they confront this catalyst of miracles in an effort to stave off catastrophe.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

For several moments after Mike keyed off the engine, they sat listening to the mesmerizing patter of rain on the car's roof. Its lull suggestive of sleep, a night in bed with someone warm he could care about and forget about tomorrow, let the rain wash their hearts clean and new.

Instead he was here, the place misery calls home. Beyond the windshield, beyond the parking lot, the ministry compound was a scattered array of buildings, barely seen. Lights floating in the dark.

Ramon made sure the safety was engaged on his pistol after carefully chambering the first round, then stashed it beneath his jacket. "If that Gabriel Matthews guy pops up around a corner, I'm not sure I'd even recognize him."

"Don't worry. I'll panic enough for both of us."

"What happens if he shows up?"

"I guess it depends on how frisky he's feeling."

"I'm not hot on the idea of having to shoot anybody, Mikey."

Mike said he wasn't either, but was that entirely honest? Hadn't there been a few vengeance-based fantasies since first coming face-to-face with him? Acting on Edie's behalf, an eye for an eye. The most Mike could assure himself was that he hoped it would not have to happen tonight.

They worked up nerve to leave the car after their

breath began to condense on the glass. Merc shapes in the dark, cloaked by rain, their identities well-guarded, yet it still felt skittishly like stepping onto a stage. This was the closest he had openly come to the compound. Hunching inside their jackets, they headed for the dorm.

The call from Amanda Dawson had been a godsend, as he had been tapped out of ideas beyond waiting until Sunday morning and blending in with the congregation during the telecast, seeing what developed. At least she trusted him now, and more importantly, knew how dangerous Gabe was.

On the other hand, she had had some peculiar things to relate about Donny's newest employee. A genuine healer, no wonder Donny was pulling the gang-healing routine these day. Misdirection, a classic ploy of any magician worth his top hat.

Raindrops needled their faces, eyes. As they skirted around the chapel, to their right sat a huge satellite dish, pale in the gloom. Tilted toward the heavens, looking like a vast platter. Awaiting the feast of all saints.

In the dorm lobby, they shook off excess water and tried to look like they belonged, every right to be there. Above suspicion. A few people loitered ahead in the lounge area. Some tall skinny kid with a prominent Adam's apple peered curiously at them, then resumed a battle of wits with a stubborn candy machine. A trio of young women watched a console TV. Mike and Ramon ascended to the second floor of the men's wing. Footsteps soft on a dense carpet, they paced down the hallway of numbered doors, from behind which music and voices floated. Mike stopped before one.

"Amanda thinks this is the one," he whispered.

"She doesn't know for sure?"

"Hey, she doesn't get out much."

A steady breath, then Mike knocked. Waited. Knocked again. A faint rustling stirred beyond the door, a slow shifting—

"What? What? What is it?" A fierce grumble.

He could say nothing of sense to a closed door, so he knocked again, with urgency. Finally, a lock clicked and the door was yanked open. The room was dark, but the hall light showed more of its resident than Mike was ready to see.

Clothing, hair, state of mind, they all looked as if

this guy had lived through a plane crash. Barefoot, he wavered in the doorway while glaring at them with dark-ringed eyes. A crust of dried blood streaking his inner arm, from wrist to elbow.

"What?" A wild-eyed demand. "I'm busy."

"Are you Paul?" Mike said.

He looked into the floor, as if identity could be found there. Then up again. "Uh huh."

"Can we come in a minute? We're friends of Mrs. Dawson." He gave Paul their names.

Paul's contemplation was long and taxing, and he finally lurched away from the door, back into the room. Mike followed, swatting at the wall in search of a light switch. He and Ramon stopped at the sight of a few more spatters of blood dried on the floor. When it had still been wet, Paul had stepped in it, left random footprints across the floor. At the moment, he slouched on his bed, a razor blade loosely held in his fingers. This did not paint a comforting picture.

"You doing okay in here?" Ramon asked. "You don't look so good."

"I'm okay." Paul said it too hurriedly, all one word, *Imokay*. "Fine, just fucking fine."

Mike took a couple uneasy steps toward him. Like approaching a big dog that neither growled nor wagged its tail; make a fast friend or lose body parts.

"Amanda's kind of worried about you. She tried to call earlier and couldn't get through."

"I pulled the cord. Out of the wall." He gestured over a shoulder, and sure enough, there sat his phone on a desk, with a severed umbilical of frayed wires.

"She wanted us to give you a message from her, since she couldn't make it over here herself. She was wondering if, maybe, you might want to consider backing out of your part in the show tomorrow. She's worried that something might go wrong for you, or happen to you."

Paul sat on the edge of his bed, held his face in taut hands. Rubbing one over his eyes, through his hair. Dried blood even flaked from his hair, maroon dandruff. He laughed with a sound like tearing cloth.

"I dated this girl in college, see," he said. "And for a whole month I thought I wanted to break up with her. But just before I was ready to do it, the bitch beat me to it. Oh man. I wanted her back like I never wanted anything. Just because I couldn't have her."

Mike waited for further explanations, where's the relevance, but none seemed forthcoming. "I think I'm missing something here."

Paul groaned, looked weary up at him, as one who did not suffer a fool gladly. "I was to the point where, show up tomorrow or miss it, I didn't care either way. But now that somebody tells me I shouldn't do it, I can't have it, well I'm so sorry, but I *really* want to *do* this show!" Shaking his head, popping his fists together at the knuckles. "What does everybody think I am around here? Some kind of checker, some kind of pawn, stick me here

or there or wherever the hell you feel like? I'm a human being, I have feelings, *feelings*, so just fuck all of you. Fuck! You! All!"

Mike held his hands palms-out, telling him easy, take it easy, a sinking feeling within, here he stood witnessing a personal disintegration live as it happened. He looked at Ramon, who hunched his shoulders, at equal loss. He saw that Paul had let the razor blade fall to the floor, now defanged, and felt safer scooting in, kneeling closer.

"Amanda told us a few things about you. And if they're true, don't you think maybe you should give tomorrow a little more thought?"

Paul's head turning slowly, so slowly, eyes on cold burn, and he knew he had said something terribly wrong.

"If they're true?" Paul whispered. "If they're true? What, she told you about me and you don't believe it?"

Mike, feeling as if he were suddenly pleading for his life, and doing a right rotten job of it, "No, I didn't mean it like that, I--"

"Well then, I guess a little demonstration is in order for you," and when Paul grinned it was the most chilling thing Mike had ever seen. This to a man who, a few years ago, had sat in a courtroom and seen a public freakshow starring the aberration dubbed the Miami Hacker. A true human monster.

This was worse.

Paul swiped up the razor blade and even as Mike was falling backward he knew he had not been fast enough, that he was still in reach when the blade came shearing forward. Vicious swipe, and it caught him on the jawbone to cleave open a flap of skin and grate upon the bone, a slice of cold pain even as the hot spill warmed the side of his throat.

"No! No! Don't you run! Don't you dare run away from me!" Paul cried as he dove after him, and then Mike saw the blade was airborne, glittering red and silver across the room, and still Paul was coming, and Ramon was all huge eyes, backing out of the way and reaching inside his jacket to draw the pistol, clicking the safety off and steadyng it with two very shaky hands--

"Ramon! Don't!" Mike thrashing his head no, no, spraying drops of his blood, and then Paul had clambered atop him with one hand slapping over the three-inch incision, clamping tight, and Mike could feel a faint tingling inside his jaw, an itch--

And it was finished.

Paul rolling off him, Ramon staring at him. The gun lowering. Mike reached up to feel for himself. Beneath the slick film of blood, his skin was unbroken. Not even so much as a ridge of scar.

Paul got up from the floor. "See? I'm in control." Chuckling without mirth while walking a few steps over to Ramon, who didn't know whether to stay or run. Paul looking down at the gun, "That's very rude, that's bad manners," then snatching it from Ramon's hand.

"Put the gun down, Paul," Mike said, the voice of reason, *We're going to die*, "just put it down and we'll talk, we'll leave, we'll do anything you want, just --"

"I don't think anyone here *truly* appreciates the enormity of what's been going on inside me the past few months." Paul shuffled toward the other side of the room, speaking slowly, choosing words with great care. A demented lecturer holding his class hostage. "I don't think anyone here realizes I tried to kill myself tonight. And couldn't. I mean, could *not* get it to work. Something, somewhere, doesn't want me to die."

He had been speaking to walls, ceiling, floor, turning to them only when he was through. Facing them dead-on as he lifted the Smith and Wesson and snugged it straight into the side of his skull.

"Check it out," he said, and fired.

The gunshot numbed eardrums, the slug burrowed a devastating path through Paul's head and blew out the opposite side. Blood and brains showered while the impact knocked him off his feet and onto the bed, where he bounced as limply as a sack of grain. The gun twirled from nerveless fingers and bounced on the floor.

Mike groaned sickly, at once very chilled, and Ramon crossed himself with a shaking hand, lapsing into a rapid whisper of Spanish. Mike scooted backward to sit against the wall, as far away as possible. Holding head between knees, breathing deeply while fighting to keep his rising gorge down, give it a minute and he would be out of this place so fast--

And Paul sat up.

"Isn't that *intense*?" he said, with a twitch and a fitful burst of laughter. Head coated with gore, its inner and outer workings undergoing some impossible sort of spontaneous regeneration. He never took his eyes from either of them while retrieving the gun and hobbling closer. "I need to take that routine onto *David Letterman*, next time they do Stupid Human Tricks. Bet you nobody could top that one."

Mike wasn't believing he was witnessing any of

this, no way, the guy's craziness had infected them all with hallucinations of horrifying intensity, but then he wiped at his jaw again, and came away with truth, wet and red and sticky, and then somebody was pounding at the door, oh blessed interruption, a jolt to reality.

"Paul? You okay in there?" came a voice from the hallway. "I heard something, sounded like --"

"I had my TV on too loud!" Paul screamed. "Is that a crime? Leave me the fuck alone!" Gritting his teeth and shaking his head at the patter of footsteps in retreat, it's just been that kind of day, and he continued across the room. He slapped the gun back into Ramon's hand and helped yank Mike up to his feet. My work here is done, and he sat on the edge of his bed as if having done nothing more spectacular than open a window.

"So . . . you got the idea now?" Paul absently stroking his inner arm, flaking off more blood. The last of earlier loathing. "I . . . I cut it . . . and it sealed up again a few seconds later. Just the weirdest thing. And now this." He tapped his head, newly solid, intact. "So . . . I guess you can tell Amanda that she doesn't have to worry. Nobody can do anything to me. The damage . . . it's already been done."

He crawled around on the bed, nose wrinkling in disgust as he scooped up a glob of gray matter and slung it onto the floor. "What a mess. What a mess. I gotta get my head on straight," laughing weakly at his little joke. "I'm in control." Sinking into the covers as his eyes lost their dementia, until he looked merely paralytically terrified. Caught in something's jaws and resigned to being swallowed. "Thanks for coming by, I really do feel better now . . ."

To think they could be of any use in this room was a fool's quest. And when Mike and Ramon quietly bowed out, Paul was muttering away as if he were not even aware of them leaving.

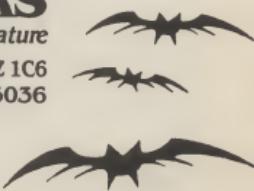
- CD

FULL MOON BOOKS

Specializing in Dark Fantasy & Horror Literature

14 SOMERSET DRIVE, BRAMPTON, ONTARIO L6Z 1C6
Peter D. Griffin

(416) 846-5036





CD BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW
by Douglas E. Winter

Grimscribe: His Lives and Works, by Thomas Ligotti, Carroll & Graf, 214pp., \$18.95.

THE TELLING, NOT THE SHOWING

Thomas Ligotti is the best-kept secret in contemporary horror fiction. For nearly a decade, while lesser talents have stocked the bookracks with a relentless supply of carbon copy chills, Ligotti has labored, unheralded and virtually unknown, to create a canon of short stories so idiosyncratic as to defy most any description save demented. Most of this writing has appeared in those obscure little magazines -- *Grue*, *Crypt of Cthulhu*, *Nyctalops* -- beloved by aficionados of dark alternative fiction but ciphers to most everyone else. His first book, *Songs of a Dead Dreamer*, was published in an edition of only 350 copies. When, almost five years after its initial appearance, this collection of stories was bravely brought to mass market by Carroll & Graf, the critical reception was overwhelming with the delight of discovery, and for good reason: Thomas Ligotti is the best new American writer of weird fiction to appear in years.

Ligotti's long-awaited second book, *Grimscribe: His Lives and Works*, presents thirteen new stories in the guise of a novel. Its eponymous narrator, like Ray Bradbury's Illustrated Man and Clive Barker's Book of Blood, is a living library of voices -- the damned, the demonic, the dreamer, among others -- all interwoven in a compelling celebration of the first-person. It is a hypnotic narration; each story is a singular experience, yet each turns on the other, creating what Ligotti rightly called a "wheel of terror." These are whirlpools of words,

drawing the reader ever inward to that place "where the mysteries are always new and dreams never end" -- a melding of Jorge Luis Borges and Tomaso Landolfi with the pulp sensibilities of the legendary *Weird Tales* magazine.

The opening story, "The Last Feast of Harlequin," is archetypal Ligotti. Its unnamed narrator, a dour and deadpan academic, travels to a remote rural village to study its quaint winter festival. That these revels disguise a perverse, primeval ritual should come as no surprise. Upon entering the warped wonderlands of Thomas Ligotti, the reader realizes very quickly that this is not a fiction of escape, but of the search for a grim epiphany, the revelation of something so vital (and, more often than not, vile) that it should have been known, yet that has escaped the narrator in his pride or hope or sloth.

The story is a reinvention of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Festival," and it is that much-mythologized (and maligned) writer of weird fiction with whom Ligotti inevitably must be compared. Like Lovecraft, Ligotti weaves an oppressive web of words, working his narrator, and his readers, toward the edge of an unknowable mystery -- one of such ominous power that the mere hint of it is fatal: "This is only how it seems," Ligotti tells us, "and seeming is everything." Yet he avoids Lovecraft's excesses -- the pseudoscience and adjectival addiction that marred even the Lovecraftian classics -- and embraces a decadent undercurrent in a manner that would no doubt have caused the gentleman from Providence to blush.

The result is a rare kind of horror fiction, one that draws its power not from violence or shock, monsters or mayhem, but from the pursuit of a vague discomfort, a lingering doubt. Ligotti's prose is eerily genteel, written in utter defiance (or ignorance) of the filmic influences that have rendered most contemporary horror fiction into splatterprose. Vital to his aesthetic is an insistently oniric imagery -- not simply a landscape, but a language,

of nightmare. For once it is the telling, and not the showing, that is key, the stories themselves forming baroque ruins of dread and decay.

"They could show themselves anywhere, if always briefly. Upon a cellar wall there might appear an ill-formed visage among the damp and fractured stones, a hideous impersonation of a face infiltrating the dark corners of our homes. Other faces, leprous masks, would arise within the grain of panelled walls or wooden floors, spying for a moment before sinking back into the knotty shadows . . . And there were so many nameless patterns that might spread themselves across the boards of an old fence or the side of a shed, engravings all tangled and wizened like a subterranean craze of roots and tendrils, an underworld riot of branching convolutions, gnarled ornaments."

At his best moments, Ligotti succeeds with morbid brilliance; at others, like Lovecraft, he simply overwhelms the reader with words. Reading *Grimscribe* is at times daunting, at others annoying, yet always a vindication of the literate tale of terror -- a proposition that grows increasingly unthinkable in a decade that has come to think of "horror" as the realm of vampires and violence.

REVIEWS
by Mike Baker

Trickster, by Chris Curry and Lisa Dean, Pocket Books, August 1992, 496 pp., mmp, \$4.99 (ISBN 0-671-68434-5)

In 1889, sixty-six square blocks of downtown Seattle burned down. Rather than raise the burned buildings, the city founders decided to build atop them, and they created the Underground in the process, a dark, gloomy city under the city filled with cobwebs, charred timbers, and plenty of spooky atmosphere. It's a fascinating place (I can still vividly remember taking a tour of it as part of a grade school field trip, and that was over 15 years ago), and one which any horror fan should check out when visiting Seattle.

The Underground plays a crucial part in *Trickster*, the latest novel by Chris Curry and Lisa Dean, and they capture it, and the feel of the city, perfectly. The book's plot concerns a serial killer who is committing murders around the Underground. This isn't just any old serial killer (something Seattle has had more than its share of) though, but a sorcerer who is attempting to gain the powers of the Salishan Indian god Trickster through a bloody arcane ritual.

Trickster has a lot of nice touches which raise it above your average horror novel, including an interesting plot, likable characters, and an accurate depiction of the city and Indian legends, but the thing that really made the

book for me (other than the Underground) was the killer, especially his tendency to be anal retentive. There's something perversely hilarious about a serial killer who's repulsed by the thought of getting blood on his clothes, and who double plastic bags his grisly trophies.

It's surprising how much Curry and Dean have improved since the earlier *Winter Scream*. That book was enjoyable, but highly uneven. *Trickster*, on the other hand, keeps a steady, easily readable pace throughout. My only complaints about it are these: it's a little on the long side (almost 500 pages) and the final confrontation with the sorcerer seemed a bit rushed. Other than that, I enjoyed *Trickster* quite a bit, and recommend it.

**

Serial Slaughter, by Michael Newton, Loompanics Unlimited, March 1992, 173 pp., trade paperback, \$19.95 (ISBN 1-55950-078-6)

Serial Slaughter is a non-fiction, in-depth look at serial killers by Michael Newton, the author of *Hunting Humans: An Encyclopedia of Modern Serial Killers*, a must-have reference book for anyone interested in the dark side of humanity. Newton spent 10 years studying the files of over 800 serial killers, and it shows; this book is filled with information, all of which is presented in a straight-forward, non-sensationalistic manner. He just states the grim, disturbing facts, backing them up with copious footnotes listing their original sources. Topics covered include the various types of serial killers, their methods and killing techniques, how they go about choosing their victims, and what drives them to kill. The methods which law enforcement agencies use to catch them are also discussed, and a copy of the VICAP (Violent Criminal Apprehension Program) Crime Analysis Report -- a questionnaire used by the FBI's National Center for Violent Crime to define, track, and (hopefully) capture serial killers -- is also included.

One disturbing fact that this book points out is that many serial killers were abused as children. When you read what some of them were subjected to, it comes as no surprise that they turned out as they did, and you can't help but feel sorry for them. This is one aspect of serial killers you rarely see discussed; it's far easier to think of people like John Gacy and Henry Lucas and Charles Manson as human monsters -- evil incarnate. Thankfully, Newton takes the time to show them as they once were: innocents who were irreparably warped by hellish childhoods. Hugh Morse, a rape-slayer who was scarred for life (both physically and mentally) by a hammer-wielding grandmother, summed it up perfectly when he said, "I can't remember being happy at any time since I was born."

Serial Slaughter is an extremely scary book, one which puts almost all horror novels to shame. In one

chapter, serial killers talk about their feelings on life, murder, sex, and death. Many are eloquent, some even witty, but all are profoundly disturbing; these are real people, not the creation of a writer's imagination, and that's really scary. Highly recommended.

**

Deathgrip, by Brian Hodge, Dell/Abyss, June 1992, 481 pp., mmp, \$4.99 (ISBN 0-440-21112-3)

Deathgrip is the latest from Brian Hodge, author of *Nightlife*, *Dark Advent*, and *Oasis*, and it's also his best yet. *Deathgrip* tells the story of Paul Handler, a St. Louis AOR deejay who has the power to heal with his touch, a gift which has a nasty side-effect: he can kill as well as cure by laying on his hands. It's also about Donny Dawson, a faith healer who has lost the faith, a self-deluded thief in priest's clothing who has begun to notice the hypocrisy filling his life, and who looks longingly back to the one time his touch actually did heal someone. Two vastly different men who find themselves drawn together, for purposes neither truly understands.

Deathgrip is all of the above, and more. It's a wonderfully complex book which works on many levels; not only is it an entertaining read, it also makes insightful observations about everything from love and self-sacrifice to the living habits of your average bachelor deejay.

One thing I really enjoy about Brian Hodge's writing, and this becomes more and more evident with every book, is the way that he takes the time to make his characters as realistic as possible. Some authors have the gift of being able to define someone in a couple of sentences, while others prefer to go for the more detailed, in-depth route. Hodge is one of the latter; he takes his time, but he also does it right. It's easy to relate to his characters because they always seem like real people. No one is perfect. The heroes aren't flawless, nor the villains totally heartless, and they're all the more believable for it. He also has a sense of humor, something which far too few horror writers possess, and he knows how, and more importantly, when, to use it.

If you haven't read any of Brian Hodge's work yet, you owe it to yourself to read *Deathgrip*. Pick it up and see what you've been missing. Highly recommended.

**

Borderland, by S.K. Epperson, Donald I. Fine, Inc., March 1992, 319 pp., hc, \$19.95 (ISBN 1-55611-317-X)

S.K. Epperson is one of the rising stars of the suspense field, and *Borderland* succeeds in further establishing her reputation as an always dependable writer. Epperson's previous two novels, *Brother Lowdown* and *Dunford Blood* were straight suspense-thrillers, and

highly-entertaining ones at that. *Borderland* is more of the same, but this time with a supernatural twist.

The plot revolves around Denke, a town on the Colorado-Kansas border. An unassuming place, old-fashioned and perfect in a sitcom sort of way, it nonetheless hides secrets of the darkest sort, including the deadly methods by which the town council keeps its coffers filled. The residents of Denke don't take kindly to strangers, as Nolan Wulf, his friend Vic Kimmier, and Vic's two young daughters discover when they move into Vic's father's old house on the outskirts of town.

As is standard for any of Epperson's novels, *Borderland* has spot-on characterization throughout. It also has a goodly amount of plot twists, and lots of witty, believable dialogue. Unfortunately, it also has a major flaw: the supernatural element. The Kimmier house has a resident spirit, one which never seems to fit in with the rest of the book -- all of the scenes with it just don't seem right. Plot-wise the ghost has negligible purpose; it doesn't even appear very often (though it does play an integral part in one scene, which, I hasten to add, comes across as a major cop-out) and could have been excised from the book with no loss whatsoever.

Even with the ghost, *Borderland* is still an enjoyable book. Epperson is an excellent writer, one who will surely go far. Recommended.

**

The Vampire Odyssey, by Scott Ciencin, Zebra, August 1992, mmp, \$4.50 (ISBN 0-8217-3853-4)

Vampires. There's no escaping them. They're everywhere, even in that mecca of snobbery and vice, the city that Zsa Zsa Gabor proudly calls her home, Beverly Hills. Beautiful people with expensive cars, cellular phones, perfect hair . . . and fangs.

I've got a definite prejudice against vampire novels; there are just too many of the damned things coming out recently, and most of them aren't very good. So when I got Scott Ciencin's *The Vampire Odyssey*, I wasn't expecting to like it. Then I started reading it, and I wasn't very impressed. I stuck with it, though (I always like read anything I review from cover to cover) and, much to my surprise, it got better. A lot better. And it kept getting better, with Ciencin throwing in plot twists at every turn, right up to an extremely powerful ending.

It becomes obvious while reading *The Vampire Odyssey* that Ciencin is a big fan of film director James Cameron; almost all of Cameron's films are mentioned in passing, some more than once. Ciencin shares a fondness for strong female characters with Cameron (both the main characters, half-vampire Dani and her adopted mother, private detective Samantha Walthers, are women who are more than capable of taking care of themselves) as well as a love for high-energy action

scenes (there's a high-speed chase which ends in a shopping mall which is a real knockout). In fact, this book kind of reads like a Cameron film, but it also has a depth to it which sets it apart, making it more than just a literary homage.

The Vampire Odyssey is far from perfect; Ciencin's writing is rough in spots, and he needs to work on his characterization a bit. He does show quite a bit of promise, though, and his love for the genre shows through in his work; *The Vampire Odyssey* has an infectious sense of excitement and energy to it which makes it a fun read. If you like your books fast-paced and surprising, then you'll love *The Vampire Odyssey*. Recommended.

**

Destiny's Carnival, by Warren Murphy and Mark Brownwood, Fawcett, January 1992, 197 pp., mmp, \$4.99 (ISBN 0-449-14754-1)

The cover of *Destiny's Carnival* says that it was written by Warren Murphy (whose name is in big letters) and Mark Brownwood (who gets much smaller billing). Murphy is the co-creator of the mega-successful "The Destroyer" series (which I happen to be a huge fan of), as well as the author of the "Trace" detective novels (another good series), among other things. He's an immensely talented writer with a real gift for characterization and dialogue, and I enjoy his writing enough to actively seek it out. Mark Brownwood, on the other hand, is an unknown; *Destiny's Carnival* is his first novel.

Destiny's Carnival is predictable from start to finish. It has a couple of nice moments, but mostly it's non-stop clichés. The dialogue is trite, the characterization bland, and the plot ludicrous. Logic flaws abound, and suspense is almost non-existent. It bears little resemblance to anything else Murphy has ever written, which brings me to the point of this diatribe: by my estimation, I'd say that *Destiny's Carnival* is 90 percent Brownwood and 10 percent Murphy. And you know what . . . that really pisses me off! Thank you, Fawcett, for passing this book off as something it isn't. I realize that by playing up Murphy's name you've increased this book's sales (sucker fans of his -- like me -- will be lured into picking it up when they might have otherwise ignored it had only Brownwood's name been on the cover), but have you really gained anything? No, all you've succeeded in doing is disillusioning readers so that the next time you try something like this, it might not work as well.

"Collaborations" like this are generally referred to as master/slave collaborations (so-called because the name writer generally gets a substantial portion of the advance while the unknown, who does most of the work, gets a pittance), and they've been around for a while in both the science fiction and mystery fields. Theoretically, they're a good place for young writers to get a start in the

business, or mid-level writers to make a quick buck. Ultimately, though, they're just another way for publishers to con die-hard fans into parting with their hard-earned cash.

Don't make the mistake I did; if you see what appears to be a master/slave collaboration featuring one of your favorite authors, give it a good once over before you buy it. You might save yourself some disappointment, and money. Not recommended.

**

Wolf Flow, by K.W. Jeter, St. Martin's Press, April 1992, 288pp., hc, \$18.95 (ISBN 0-312-07125-6)

K.W. Jeter's writing, while not to everyone's taste, is some of the finest in the horror field today. He never goes for the obvious, or the commercial, and his books are always guaranteed to be unlike anything else you've ever read before. Jeter's work is what horror should be . . . dark, dangerous, and unpredictable.

Wolf Flow tells the story of an abandoned spa whose waters have special powers and the people whose lives become entwined with it. It also has one of the best opening sentences I've read in a while, one which instantly grabs you, forcing you to read on: "The car must have been doing fifty when they threw him out."

Now that's the way a book should start.

This book does have its flaws, minor though they may be. At times it tends to be a bit too surreal, and gets confusing in the process. It's rather slowly paced, too; the plot doesn't really get going until after the halfway point. It's never dull, though, which is a tribute to Jeter's skill as a writer; even when nothing much is happening, he's still able to hold your attention.

While some people might find *Wolf Flow*'s nihilistic tone, and less-than-wholesome characters, off-putting, they didn't bother me one bit. Life-affirming horror, to me, equates with boring; give me nasty fiction, stories with an edge, any day. And *Wolf Flow* certainly has an edge; as the ending approaches, it gets more and more brutal, building to some truly unsettling acts of graphic violence.

Wolf Flow isn't a book for the faint of heart, or those looking for a happy ending. It's as dark as the spa's waters, and just as addicting. Recommended.

REVIEW
by Stefan Dziemianowicz

The Count of Eleven, by Ramsey Campbell, London: Macdonald, Nov. 1991, L 13.95, 374 pp.; New York: Tor, June 1992, \$19.95, 310 pp.

Ramsey Campbell's last three novels -- *The Influence* (1988), *Ancient Images* (1989), and *Midnight Sun* (1991) -- are textbook examples of how the literary tradition of supernatural fiction continues to inform the best of modern horror. It's partly because we've come to expect classic overtones in Campbell's work that his latest effort, *The Count of Eleven*, seems such a startling departure. It is an extraordinarily "modern" novel, one that echoes many themes of Campbell's previous novels yet is unlike anything he has written before.

The cryptic title refers to an obsession with numerology nurtured by protagonist Jack Orchard, one of the most luckless men in Liverpool. The novel opens with the burning down of Jack's uninsured video store; in quick succession his bank account is drained by thieves, he's denied a loan for a new home, his daughter Laura is mugged, and his wife Julia loses her job. Mind you, this all occurs in just the *first half* of the novel.

What keeps these disasters from seeming so irredeemably bleak is Jack's amiably clownish personality. Though his every step is a pratfall, he's quick with a joke and irrepressibly optimistic. It's this latter quality that convinces him to turn his family's luck around for the better by passing on a chain letter to select recipients whose names, like his, tote up numerologically to a lucky 11. When the Orchard family's lot *doesn't* improve, Jack can think of only one reason why: some of the recipients have broken the chain, deflecting bad luck that should befall them back onto him. Jack pays them visits to make them listen to reason. When some won't, Jack has no recourse but to make them see their error in countermanding fate.

We have seen Jack's type before in Campbell's fiction. He's not unlike Peter Priest in *Obsession* (1985), the most persuaded of four friends that, through a childhood prank, they have bartered their souls to dark forces and are no longer masters of their fates. Campbell's fiction -- particularly *Obsession* and *The Hungry Moon* (1986) -- abounds with characters who cling desperately, even mindlessly, to any belief that will allow them to displace responsibility for ordering their lives onto someone or something else, be it political systems, supernatural powers, or religious faith. Jack's faith is in numbers: "They're what life is made of. Without them we'd never understand the world." But as we watch him perform tortuous mental gyrations to rationalize how events working in his favor add up numerologically to 11, we see that he is a man unwilling to accept randomness in life, a frightening epitome of the "true believer" who is little more than an instrument of his faith.

In this regard, Jack also resembles John Horridge of *The Face That Must Die*, a paranoiac who achieves a modicum of security by targeting and executing his imagined enemies. Repugnant as Horridge's view of the world is, one finds its simplicity seductive. Yet Jack is vastly different from Horridge in one major respect: we

like him. The extraordinary achievement of *The Count of Eleven* is that Campbell uses Jack's appeal to stand the serial killer story on its head. Jack is neither that usual loathsome species of subhuman psychopath who runs amok in splatter novels, nor is he an anti-heroic vigilante type who earns our respect by compensating for an unfair justice system. He's a man whose misguided beliefs serve a good purpose: to protect his family. Accordingly, we sympathize with Jack even as he knowingly inflicts injuries so gruesome that Campbell finds it necessary to cut away from the scene. There are many qualities for which to praise *The Count of Eleven*, including its successful blending of slapstick humor with serious drama and subtle satire on our numerically-dependent modern world; but ultimately, it is the reader's response to Jack that is most noteworthy. Any horror novel can push emotional buttons, but only rare ones like *The Count of Eleven* encourage us to reflect on our feelings, and by what right we hold them.

REVIEWS

by Roman A. Ranieri

Quick Chills 2, edited by Robert Morrish & Peter Enfantino, Deadline Press, \$45.00 (ISBN 0-9631367-3-9)

Although many people seem to think that the term "small press" denotes inferior material, I have always managed to find a wealth of good fiction in these limited publications. I regularly submit my own work to them, and also try to give them additional visibility in my various review columns. Check out a few sample copies, I think you'll be impressed.

"To His Children In Darkness" by Gary A. Braunbeck originally appeared in *Cemetery Dance* #6. What makes this tale stand out from the pack is the way that Braunbeck skillfully weaves elements of classic Greek mythology into a contemporary account of a vicious serial killer.

For the second time in four years, young boys are being murdered and savagely mutilated in Cedar Hill. Cletus Johnson, the sheriff who lost his job when he failed to solve the first series of crimes, is called back by the current sheriff to lend his expertise to the new investigation. The two men slowly uncover a hideous conspiracy thousands of years old.

Of course, Greek mythology is certainly not new, but I found this story utterly refreshing after laboring through countless tales of vampires, zombies, and demonic children.

Another excellent tale is "Hot Orgy of the Caged Virgins" by Elizabeth Massie, which first appeared in *Iniquities* #2. It concerns a group of small-town friends

who decide to add a little spice to their boring, mundane lives. They agree to get together at the old, abandoned barn on Pusgah Knoll and enact their own version of *Hot Orgy of the Caged Virgins*, a porno movie playing at the local drive-in. However, what begins as harmless sex-play, quickly turns into a horrifying spectacle of cruel vengeance. When it comes to believable regional fiction, Massie is one of the best.

Nancy Holder, Douglas Clegg, Bentley Little, Mark Rainey, Wayne Allen Sallee, and David B. Silva also provide some remarkable stories. *Quick Chills 2* is an excellent introduction to the high-quality work being featured within the small press.

**

Wetbones, by John Shirley, Ziesing Books, \$25.00 (ISBN 0-929480-63-5)

For several years now, John Shirley has been one of the best writers in the dark fantasy genre, producing both exceptional novels and short stories on a regular basis. Why he hasn't yet gained superstar status is a mystery to me, his work is really *that* good.

Wetbones is a blend of the classic horror elements of supernatural fiction, and the all-too-real horrors of contemporary life on the streets. The story begins with Hollywood screenwriter Tom Prentice visiting the morgue to identify the horribly wasted body of his lover, Amy. Shirley then quickly introduces the rest of the cast: Hollywood producer Zack Arthwright, former drug addict Garner and his teenaged daughter Constance, a psychic vampire serial killer called Orpheus and Eurydice, and a couple of very human monsters known as More Man and the Handy Man.

Once the main characters are established, the book quickly accelerates to a feverish pitch. The settings, characters, and dialogue literally vibrate with authenticity. By his own admission, Shirley is intimately familiar with both the phony glitz of Hollywood, and the dangerous underworld of drugs. Evil is presented here in nearly all of its various guises.

Although I have no specific complaints about the story's climax, I felt it didn't quite achieve the level of excellence maintained throughout the earlier scenes. But all things considered, *Wetbones* is one of those rare books that you'll remember long after reading the final page.

**

Last Call, by Tim Powers, Morrow Books, \$23.00 (ISBN 0-688-10732-X)

Like John Shirley, Tim Powers is a tremendously talented writer who has yet to achieve the widespread recognition he deserves. His fantasy novels *The Drawing of the Dark*, *The Anubis Gates*, *On Stranger Tides*, and

The Stress of Her Regard seamlessly blend actual historical figures and events with fantastical elements reminiscent of grand masters Robert E. Howard and Ray Bradbury.

In *Last Call*, protagonist Scott Crane is a retired professional Poker player. After nearly ten years away from the gambling palaces of Las Vegas, Crane is now being haunted by nightmares of a weird Poker game that took place on a houseboat on Lake Mead in 1969. That game, in which he won a fortune twenty-one years ago is, in a strange mystical way, not yet finished.

Powers is a consummate storyteller, introducing a vast array of memorably bizarre characters, and sustaining a roaring pace of violent events. The tone of the novel is part hardboiled detective, and part Lovecraftian cosmic horror.

Using the fact that our modern set of playing cards originally evolved from the ancient tarot deck, Powers constructs a scenario in which the art of gambling becomes a form of combat among potent cosmic forces vying for control over the future of the universe.

Hopefully, *Last Call* will be the book that introduces Tim Powers to a wider mainstream audience. Pick up a copy. You won't be disappointed.

SAMMON (Con't from page 87)

Books, 1992). Chris Golden has here put together an excellent collection of *essays du cinema* by some of the brightest luminaries in the horror field; I particularly liked the contributions by Doug Winter, Steve Bissette, Phil Nutman, Nancy Collins, Joe Lansdale, Skipp/Spector and Katherine Ramsland -- and I haven't even finished reading the damn book yet! Meself is represented by a little David Lynch piece titled "The Salacious Gaze"; it casts a gimlet eye on *Blue Velvet/Twin Peaks/Wild At Heart*. I'm sure he'll never believe this, but David, my essay was meant as constructive criticism.

Finally, I'd like my readers to know that I am now accepting submissions for *Splatterpunks 2*. This sequel to my 1990 *Splatterpunks* anthology will be coming out in 1993 from Tor Books. Stories I'm looking for must not only push the sexual/splatter envelope but also be well-written pieces with engaging characters and thoughtful subtexts.

I'm serious about those qualities, by the way. Potential contributors should read *Splat 1* stories like "Night They Missed The Horror Show," "Full Throttle" or "City of Angels" to get an idea of what I want. And like.

Submissions to *Splat 2* (or letters about this column!) can be sent to: Paul Sammon, c/o Rough Cuts, CD Publications, Box 858, Edgewood, MD 21040.

That's it. Don't forget those Republican-weasels.



THE END-
FOR NOW...

COMING THIS SUMMER ...

CEMETERY DANCE #13

Look for original contributions from authors in the horror, mystery, suspense, and crime genres! Contributors to the Summer Issue include:

Dan Simmons
Barbara Michaels
B.W. Battin
Joe R. Lansdale
Charles Grant
Thomas F. Monteleone
Matthew Costello
Ed Gorman
Paul Sammon
David Webb
Kathy Ptacek
Ed Bryant
Tyson Blue
Bob Morrish
T. Liam McDonald
Charles Lang
* And a few surprise guests

(ON SALE: 2nd week of August)

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. a
2. f
3. e
4. h
5. j
6. i
7. c
8. b
9. d
10. g

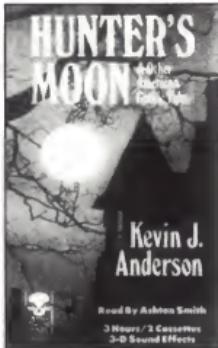
MONSTERS:



Three Tales By
Joseph A. Citro

Read By Joseph A. Citro
8 Stories
90 Minutes / 1 Cassette
3-D Sound Effects

3 Stories/90 Minutes
1 cassette in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-488-6
ST104—\$9.95



**Kevin J.
Anderson**

Read By Ashton Smith
3 Stories / 2 Cassettes
3-D Sound Effects

6 Stories/3 Hours
2 cassettes in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-492-4
ST108—\$14.95

DARK DIXIE

TALES OF SOUTHERN HORROR

RONALD KELLY



Read By Reg Green
90 Minutes / 1 Cassette
3-D Sound Effects

5 Stories/90 Minutes
1 cassette in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-489-4
ST105—\$9.95

STAINED BLACK



Horror Stories
Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Read By
Jean Westfale

3 Hours-
2 Cassettes
3-D
Sound
Effects

4 Stories/3 Hours
2 cassettes in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-490-8
ST106—\$14.95

THESE DREAMS THAT SLEEP DISTURB

DAVID B. SILVA



Read By
Reg Green
And Jean
Westfale

3-D
Sound
Effects

3 Hours-
2 Cassettes
3-D
Sound
Effects

4 Stories/3 Hours
2 cassettes in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-491-6
ST107—\$14.95

SEXPUNKS & SAVAGE SAGAS



DAHL, O'BRYAN, SMITH, STURGES
WRITTEN & READ BY
RICHARD SUTPHEN

Read By Reg Green
90 Minutes / 1 Cassette
3-D Sound Effects

10 Stories/3 Hours
2 cassettes in book-size case
ISBN-0-87554-487-8
ST103—\$14.95



SPINE-TINGLING PRESS
AUDIO SAMPLER 1

FREE One Hour
Sampler for
cost of Shipping
& Handling

Audio Books With 3-D Sound Effects

The finest short stories by best-selling writers, read by Hollywood's leading voicing talents, are now available on audio cassette with incredible 3-D sound effects.

With these initial releases, **Spine-Tingling Press** becomes the "Voice of Horror." Check us out; there is nothing available on the market that can compare to our tapes.

The one-hour **Audio Sampler** will be included with all orders but if you want to listen to the Sampler first, send \$2.00 for shipping/handling. We'll rush you the cassette and add you to our mailing list.

In addition to the above audio books, forthcoming releases include titles by Rick Hautala, Bentley Little, Steve Rasnic Tem, Chet Williamson, and many more top horror, thriller and mystery writers.

We urge you to support your independent bookseller, but if they do not carry **Spine-Tingling Press** tapes, you may order direct. To order with VISA or MasterCard: On a separate sheet, list your card number, expiration date, and sign your request. **Toll-Free Order Phone:** In California: 1-800-225-4717. Outside CA: 1-800-421-6603. Or you can FAX your order: 1-818-706-3606.

Spine-Tingling Press
Box 186, Agoura Hills, CA 91376
Spine-Tingling Press is an imprint of
Valley of the Sun Audio/Video.

TITLE	CODE	PRICE

8 1/2% Tax (CA only)
Postage: \$2.50 per order
TOTAL:

Name

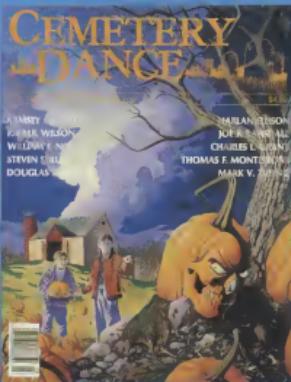
Address

City

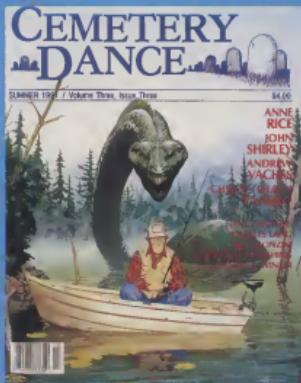
State

Zip

*\$16



1991
WORLD
FANTASY
AWARD
WINNER!



"CEMETERY DANCE is one of the best . . . I read it as soon as it comes in. Great stuff!"

-- STEPHEN KING

WHO HAS APPEARED IN CEMETERY DANCE? -- Clive Barker, Anne Rice, Peter Straub, Ramsey Campbell, Harlan Ellison, Robert Bloch, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Thomas F. Monteleone, Charles L. Grant, F. Paul Wilson, Chet Williamson, Joe R. Lansdale, Andrew Vachas, Douglas E. Winter, Ed Gorman, Bill Pronzini, Nancy Collins, Richard Laymon, William F. Nolan, Rick Hautala, Richard Christian Matheson, David Schow, Karl Edward Wagner, Rex Miller, Karl Edward Wagner, Ray Garton, Graham Masterton, Steve Rasnic Tem, Ed Bryant, Lisa Cantrell, Gary Brander, Charles Lang, David B. Silva, William Relling Jr., Matthew Costello, T. Liam McDonald, Kathy Ptacek, Paul Sammon, and hundreds of others

CEMETERY DANCE, P.O. Box 18433, Baltimore, Maryland 21237

<input type="checkbox"/> []	Three-year subscription (12 issues)	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> []	Two-year subscription (8 issues)	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> []	One-year subscription (4 issues)	\$15

BACK ISSUES: (\$5 each)

- [] CD #1 -- David B. Silva Special
- [] CD #2 -- William Relling Jr. & Steve Rasnic Tem Double Issue
- [] CD #3 -- Richard Christian Matheson (David Schow, Ray Garton)
- [] CD #4 -- ALL-PRO ISSUE (Featuring over 20 top professionals)
- [] CD #5 -- Rick Hautala Issue (Chet Williamson, Stanley Wiater)
- [] CD #6 -- J.N. Williamson Issue (F. Paul Wilson) **SOLD OUT!!!**
- [] CD #7 -- Joe R. Lansdale Issue (Peter Straub, Andrew Vachas)
- [] CD #8 -- Featuring Peter Straub, Nancy Collins, Douglas E. Winter **SOLD OUT!!!**
- [] CD #9 -- Featuring Anne Rice, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Andrew Vachas
- [] CD #10 -- Featuring Harlan Ellison, Ramsey Campbell, Joe R. Lansdale **SOLD OUT!!!**

* CHECKS PAYABLE TO CD PUBLICATIONS *